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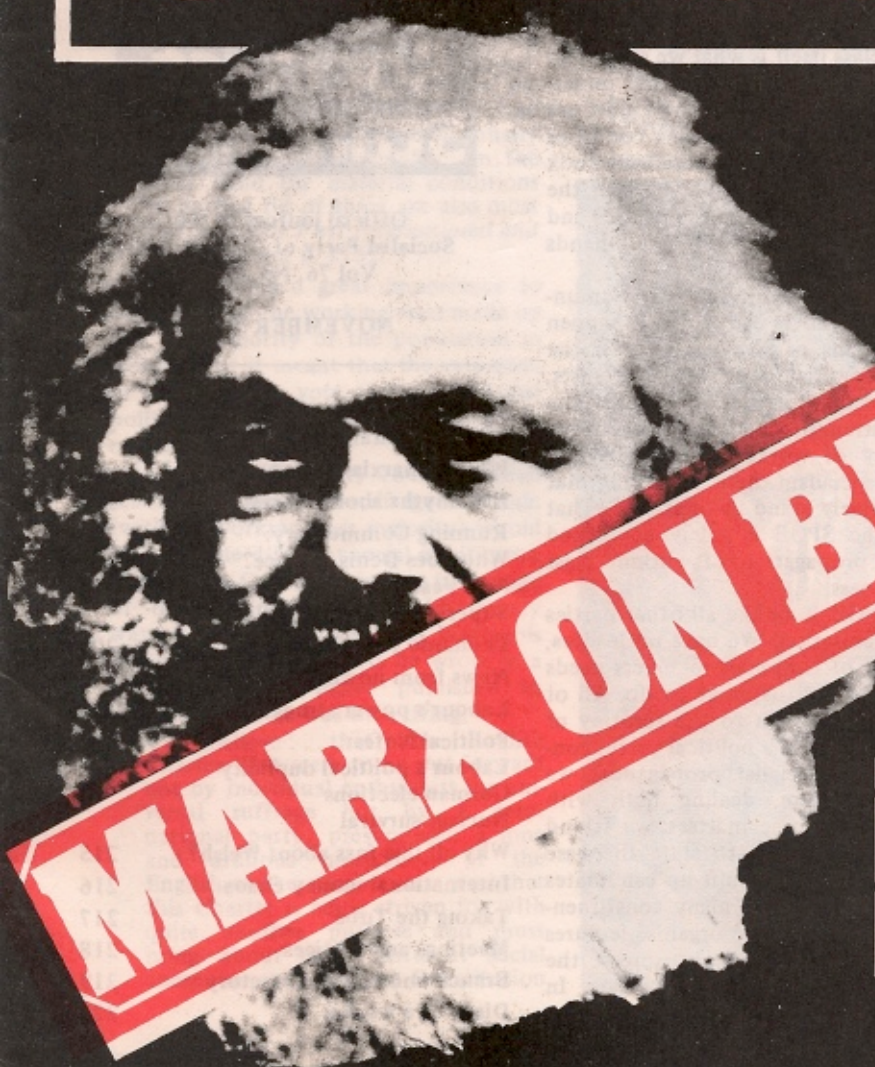
Socialist Standard

Official journal of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the World Socialist Party of Ireland · Vol 76 No 915

LABOUR'S POWER STRUGGLE

Squabbling, back-stabbing, unprincipled: it doesn't matter who wins out, the Labour Party in practice will still uphold capitalism.

page 210



MARX ON BRITAIN

Inside special feature

**BRITAIN AS MARX'S
POLITICAL MODEL**

Why we are different

Most people complain that all political parties are the same. The Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) is different from all parties, movements and sects which from time to time appeal to you for support. Our message is not designed to sell you political leaders at election times, nor does it consist of slogans with more echo than substance. The socialist case is based upon the secure grounding of political logic and material interest.

The SPGB was formed in 1904, two years before the Labour Party. Our Declaration of Principles did not arise out of a Utopian idea, but out of the real problems produced by the way in which society is organised. Modern society operates within the confines of the capitalist system. Capitalism has certain hallmarks: the minority ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution; production for profit; exploitation of the working class (all those who receive wages and salaries as a means of living) by the capitalist class (those who can live by possessing capital without having to produce wealth).

Capitalism is a system of wage slavery for the majority of people; it is impossible to run the wages system in the interest of the wage slaves. Political parties of all types have tried to reform the capitalist system in the interest of the working class, but this is a futile struggle to treat the symptoms and not the disease. Reformism is the political approach which endeavours to run capitalism without recognising the in-built antagonism between the two classes in society. Reformists, however sincerely motivated they may be, are bound to end up running society in the material interest of the ruling class.

At its inception the SPGB rejected the reformist tactics of the Labour Party. Early issues of the *Socialist Standard* predicted that the new party would fail to solve the problems faced by the working class. Nothing has happened since to persuade us to change our mind and plenty has happened to make us even more resolved in our hostility to the Labour Party. It supported two world wars and was in office when the first British atomic weapons were produced. It has nationalised industries which was simply a move from private to state capitalism—and called it socialism. It has introduced and upheld racist immigration legislation and other divisive acts of nationalism. It has used troops to break strikes. The SPGB is different from the Labour Party quite simply because we stand at all time for the social interest of the working class, whereas Labour has consistently come to the aid of the class enemy.

The political aim of the SPGB is a

response to the futility of reformism. Ours is the politics of revolution. We do not mean bloodshed and barricades when we speak of revolution, but a fundamental change in social relationships. The Socialist Party stands for a totally new system of social organisation in which the means of producing and distributing wealth—the land, factories, mines, docks, hospitals, railways—are commonly owned and democratically controlled by all members of society, without distinction of race or sex. In socialism each member of society will give according to ability and take according to self-determined needs. Money, wages, buying and selling will be things of the past, when wealth is held in common. Clearly, such a system does not operate anywhere in the world today. Neither could it exist in one country; the world system of capitalism can only be replaced by the world system of socialism.

Socialism is a democratic concept and it can only be established by conscious, democratic socialists. Leaders cannot get socialism for the working class. Indeed, the SPGB urges workers to reject all leaders and do your thinking for yourselves. The emancipation of the working class by the working class itself is what we stand for. When the workers of the world understand and want socialism they must use their political power—in many countries this means making use of the ballot box—to take social power away from the capitalists and their representatives and to place the means of life in the hands of the whole community.

The socialist revolution is not an unattainable ideal. It can and will happen when millions of workers all over the world recognise their class interests, form socialist parties and use the political strength which they have. Once a majority of workers are resolved to establish socialism there is nothing that can effectively stand in their way. That is why the SPGB is solely concerned with the propagation of working class consciousness.

The SPGB is unlike all other parties in its organisation. We have no leaders, as a party of conscious members needs no chiefs to tell us what to do. All of our affairs are open to the scrutiny of the public. We are a political party, concerned with socialist propaganda; we publish literature, dealing both with general and specific matters; we attend opponents' meetings to state the case for social sanity; we put up candidates at election time in as many constituencies as is practical; we organise lectures and outdoor meetings to spread the understanding of socialist ideas. In short, we do whatever is possible to

further what we believe to be the only worthwhile cause which is open to the working class. To join the SPGB you must be a committed socialist; applicants for membership are only admitted if they are considered to understand the case that we stand for.

We in the SPGB don't like being unique and different. We don't relish the fact that we are a small party which does not include millions of workers in its membership. We are certainly not complacent or proud about the fact that we are small. But we are proud of the fact that we have been consistently correct about what we have said for over seventy-five years. The Socialist Party of Great Britain is *different*.

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Britain as Marx's political model

The British census of 1851 revealed that for the first time the town population exceeded that of the country. Agriculture, in other words, had become a minority interest. In any event, most of those working in agriculture were wage workers so that even before this time the bulk of the active population were propertyless wage earners. With the progress of industry and the factory system, the proportion of wage workers in the population grew ever larger. Britain in Marx's time was already a capitalist country with a working class majority, as he himself was well aware. England, he wrote in a letter on behalf of the First International to its French-Swiss Federal Council in 1870

is the only country where there are no longer any peasants, and where land ownership is concentrated in very few hands. It is the only country where almost all production has been taken over on a vast scale under capitalist bosses. It is the only country where the large majority of the population consists of wage-labourers. It is the only country where the class struggle and the organisation of the working class into trade unions have actually reached a considerable degree of maturity and universality. Because of its domination of the world market, it is the only country where any revolution in the economic system will have immediate repercussions on the rest of the world. Though landlordism and capitalism are most traditionally established in this country, on the other hand the material conditions for getting rid of them are also most ripe here (*The First International and After*, Pelican, p. 115).

Marx attached great importance to this fact that the working class made up the vast majority of the population in Britain. For it meant that the extension of the right to vote there would put political power potentially in the hands of the working class.

As early as February 1848 Marx had realised that universal suffrage in Britain (with its working class majority) would have a quite different social significance than on the Continent (where it was one of the slogans of those who merely wanted to see established a bourgeois democratic Republic). As he wrote in a German-language paper published in Brussels where he was then living:

We believe... that the English Charter, if it were to be put forward not by individual enthusiasts for universal suffrage but by a great national party, presupposed a long and arduous unification of the English workers into a class, and that this Charter is being striven for with quite another purpose and must bring about quite different social consequences than the Constitution

of America or of Switzerland ever strove for or brought about (*Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung*, 13 February 1848, Marx-Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 539).

At this time, as illustrated in an article he published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* at the beginning of 1849, Marx did not believe that the Chartists would be able to win universal suffrage without an armed insurrection, a perspective shared by a minority of the Chartist leaders themselves (Julian Harney, Ernest Jones and others) with whom Marx and Engels were in contact.

After coming to England Marx did not change his mind about the social significance of the Chartist demand for universal suffrage in a country where the working class were the majority of the population, even if he had now come to believe that this could now be achieved by peaceful mass agitation. In an article he wrote on the Chartists for NYDT of 25 August 1852, he wrote:

...Universal Suffrage is the equivalent for political power for the working class of England, where the proletariat forms the large majority of the population, where, in a long, though underground civil war, it has gained a clear consciousness of its position as a class, and where even the rural districts know no longer any peasants, but only landlords, industrial capitalists (farmers) and hired labourers. The carrying of Universal Suffrage in England would,

therefore, be a far more socialistic measure than anything which has been honoured with that name on the Continent. Its inevitable result, here, is the political supremacy of the working class (Marx-Engels, *Articles on Britain*, p. 119).

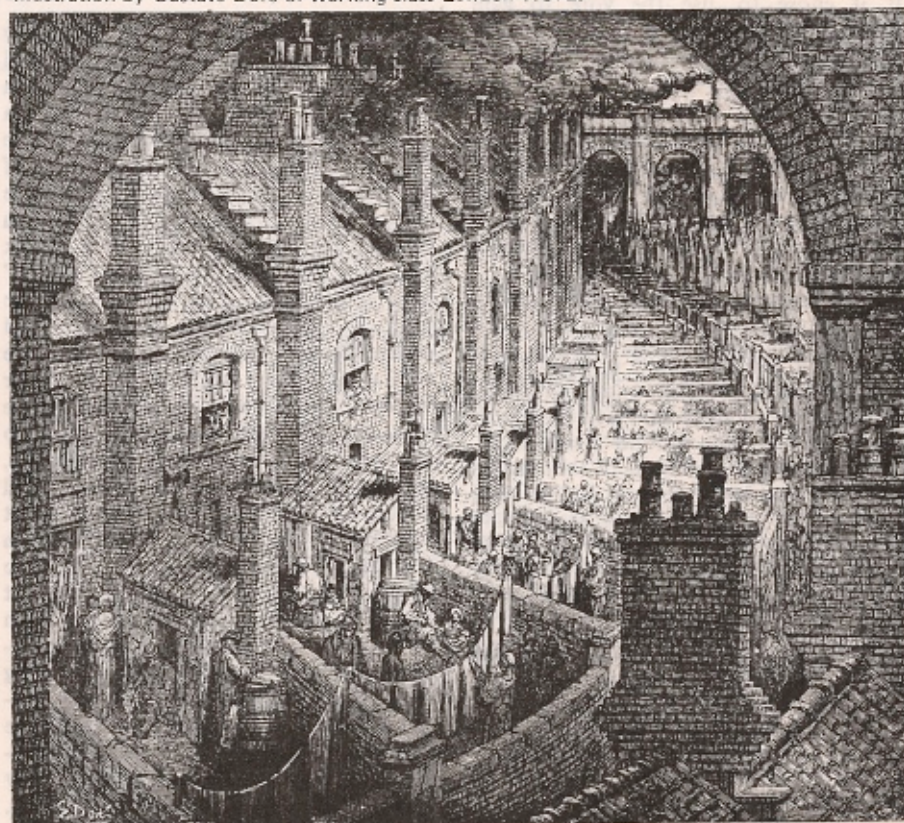
Marx returned to this question of the different significance of universal suffrage in Britain as compared with the Continent in an article published in the *Neue Oder-Zeitung* on 5 June 1855:

After the experiments which destroyed faith in the *universal suffrage of 1848* in France, the continentals are prone to underrate the importance and meaning of the English Charter. They overlook the fact that two-thirds of French society are peasants and over one-third townspeople, while in England more than two-thirds live in the towns and less than one-third in the countryside. In England the results of universal suffrage must thus be in the same inverse proportion to its results in France as town and country are in the two empires (*Articles on Britain*, p. 233).

Since 1842, when "a last but futile attempt to formulate universal suffrage as a common demand of the so-called Radicals and the masses of the people" was made, Marx went on

there has no longer been any doubt as to the meaning of universal suffrage. Nor as to its name. It is the Charter of the classes of people and implies the assumption of political

Illustration by Gustave Doré of working class London (1872)



power as a means of meeting their social requirements. That is why universal suffrage, a watchword of universal fraternisation in the France of 1848, is taken as a war slogan in England. There the immediate content of the revolution was universal suffrage; here, the immediate content of universal suffrage is the revolution (*Articles on Britain*, p. 234).

Universal suffrage, in other words, would place political power in the hands of the working class who Marx expected (over-optimistically, as it turned out) would soon use it to carry out the socialist revolution, dispossessing the capitalist and landlord classes and instituting a classless society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production.

Marx not only supported, through Ernest Jones and the *People's Paper*, the campaign of the Chartist rump in the 1850s for universal suffrage, but also, through the First International, the similar campaign of the Reform League in the 1860s.

The Second Reform Act of 1867 by no means provided for universal suffrage, but it did create a situation where the majority of voters in the towns were members of the working class. The experience of the 1868 election—which returned a Liberal government and in which no working class candidate, not even those standing for the Liberal Party, was elected—no doubt tempered Marx's earlier optimism about the "immediate" content of universal suffrage being "the revolution". But if it was no longer the immediate content, it was nevertheless still a longer term one. Now that the working class was a majority of the electorate it could, if it chose to, use the vote to gain control of political power peacefully, by sending to parliament socialist MPs mandated to institute the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. In a speech in the Hague after the Congress of the First International that had been held there in September 1872 Marx declared, according to a report in the French paper *La Liberté*:

The workers will have to seize political power one day in order to construct the new organisation of labour ... We do not claim, however, that the road leading to this goal is the same everywhere. We know that heed must be paid to the institutions, customs and traditions of the various countries, and we do not deny that there are countries, such as America and England, and if I was familiar with its institutions, I might include Holland, where the workers may attain their goals by peaceful means. That being the case, we must recognise that in most continental countries the lever of the revolution will have to be force; a resort to force will be necessary one day in order to set up the rule of labour (*First International and After*, p. 324)



Capital and Labour as portrayed in "Punch" (1847)

That a peaceful capture of political power was a possibility under certain circumstances remained Marx's view for the rest of his life. It was not his view, however, that the conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole of society would necessarily be carried out without any violence whatsoever, even in Britain. Although he believed that the extension of the franchise had given to the working class the possibility of winning political power legally and peacefully, he still expected that they were likely to meet resistance as soon as they began to use this political power against the capitalist and landlord classes.

Political power

In *Capital* Marx had carefully recorded how the capitalist class had resisted the implementation of the Ten Hours Act passed by Parliament in 1847; and he had also observed how the slave-owners of the Southern States of America had preferred armed resistance to the possibility of Congress voting a Bill to emancipate their slaves. Marx expected a similar "slaveholders' revolt" once the working class began to use the political power they had captured peacefully to legally dispossess the capitalists and landlords. In other words, it was Marx's view that, in the end, the working class would have to use the full power of the State machine, including the employment of actual physical force against a recalcitrant capitalist minority, in order to establish socialism. This employment of force would, of course, be quite legal, as it would be employed by a State which had come to be controlled, after democratic elections, by a socialist working class majority. It would be the recalcitrant capitalist minority that would be acting illegally in resisting the democratically-expressed will of the majority for a classless society to be established.

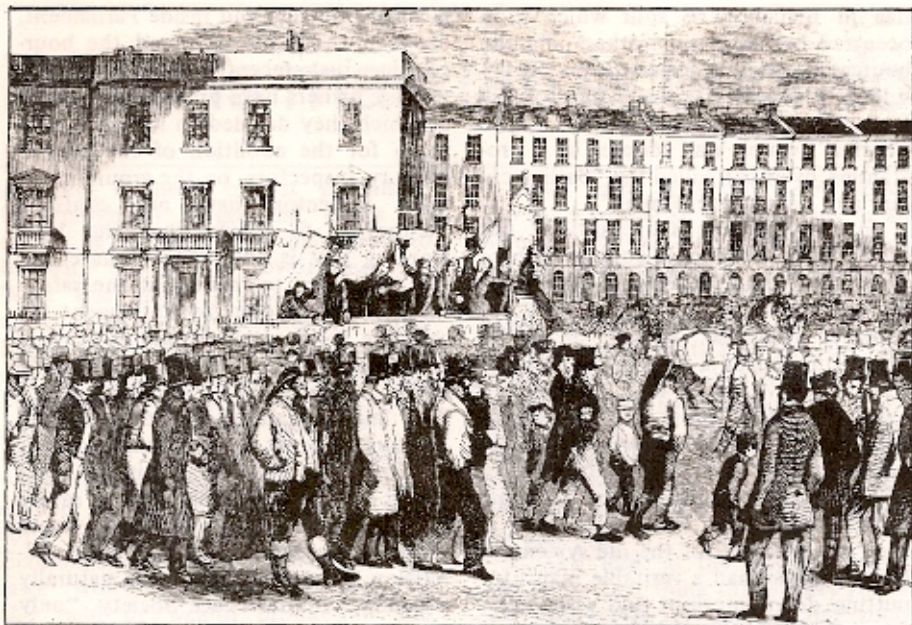
In a letter he wrote to H. M. Hyndman (the man who was later to be the moving force behind the formation of the Social Democratic Federation in Britain) on 8 December 1880, Marx declared, using the word "revolution" too loosely, if we may say so, to mean "violence":

If you say that you do not share the views of my party for England I can only reply that that party considers an English revolution not *necessary*, but—according to historic precedents—*possible*. If the unavoidable evolution turns into a revolution, it would not only be the fault of the ruling classes, but also of the working class. Every pacific concession of the former has been wrung from them by "pressure from without". Their action kept pace with that pressure and if the latter has more and more weakened, it is only because the English working class know not how to wield their power and use their liberties, both of which they possess legally (Marx, Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 313-4).

In other words, the working class could capture power peacefully if it made intelligent use of the vote and the freedom to organise politically.

So Marx's final considered view on this question can be summed up as: possibility of a peaceful capture of political power by the working class; probability of some violent resistance on the part of the capitalists to the use of this power to legally dispossess them. As Engels put it in the preface he wrote in 1886 to the first English edition of *Capital*, which was published in 1887, four years after Marx's death:

... the voice ought to be heard of a man whose whole theory is the result of a life-long study of the economic history and condition of England, and whom that study led to the conclusion that, at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means. He certainly never forgot to add that he hardly



The Chartist's march in protest (April 1848)

expected the English ruling classes to submit, without a "pro-slavery rebellion", to this peaceful and legal revolution.

Britain thus served for Marx, not only as a model for capitalist economic development, but also, with its majority working class and after the extension of the franchise, as a model for political development.

If this lesson which Marx drew from English experience has been largely neglected, this is due to Lenin, who disagreed with Marx on the possibility of a peaceful working class capture of poli-

tical power in Britain—or, rather, who put forward the absurd view that this was perhaps the case in the 1870s but not later. In actual fact, the circumstances which Marx considered made for a peaceful capture of power—a numerically superior working class, a wide suffrage, stable representative institutions—have become more, not less, widespread since Marx's day, and not only in Britain. And they have gone so far as to make even Marx's expected "pro-slavery rebellion" by a capitalist recalcitrant minority a more and more remote possibility. ALB

Marx on Britain

The Three articles—or rather the two articles and an extract from a third—which we publish here for the first time in English translation, were written by Marx in 1855 for the *Neue Oder-Zeitung*. After he came to live in Britain in 1849 Marx earned his living as the European correspondent of the *New York Daily Tribune* to which he regularly contributed articles during the ten years 1851 to 1861. In 1855 Lassalle found him an additional job as the London correspondent of the *Neue Oder-Zeitung* which provided Marx with a supplementary income until the paper ceased publication at the end of the year.

Most of the articles Marx wrote at this time, both for the NYDT and for the NOZ, were about the Crimean War. As Marx mistakenly gave support to the British-French-Turkish side in this war, these articles make very embarrassing reading today. The three articles we have selected for publication, however, are more acceptable since they concern the situation of the working class and the struggle for universal suffrage and a

shorter working week. As will be seen, Marx was particularly hostile to the industrial capitalists and to the Manchester School, the Parliamentary and Financial Reformers, the Peace Society and the Radical politicians like Joseph Hume, Richard Cobden and John Bright who expressed their interests.

We have added some footnotes to explain a number of historical references.

THE COMMERCIAL CRISIS

The *Economist* of London writes of the present commercial and industrial crisis:

Whatever may be falling off in the export of other articles, there is none in machinery. The value of 1854 exceeds the value in 1853. Other countries, therefore are now taking into use our machinery. We have no longer any advantage of this kind over them. France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and the United States are all now great manufacturing countries; and some of them have advantages over us. We have a race to run and we cannot succeed if we tie our legs. Formerly they were tied for the advantage of the landlords, or the advantage of some classes of manufacturers, and very little work we made of it, as increasing

poor rates and perennial disturbances testified.

Nations, as well as individuals, look very foolish jumping in sacks, and get many a fall. Having got rid of the restrictions for landlords and the restriction for the master manufacturer, we must now walk in the workman's manacles. Experience has satisfied every person that the restrictions imposed for the benefit of the master manufacturers injured them; and by and by the factory workers will find out that the restrictions imposed for their benefit will injure them. It is to be hoped, however, that they will find out before the countries before mentioned have made such progress as to supercede England in their own and third markets and have reduced the factory hands to destitution. (*Economist*, No. 594, 13 January 1855.)

Mr. Wilson, editor of the *Economist* and office boy at the Treasury of the anointed and oily man called Gladstone, apostle of freedom and careerist in one and the same person, who denies in one column of his journal the need for a State in general and demonstrates in the next the absolute necessity of the Coalition Ministry(1) in particular, this Mr. Wilson begins his homily with a deliberate falsification. The export statistics for 1854 contain in fact two headings for the export of machines. The first refers to railway engines and shows that in 1853 exports were £443,259 against £525,707 in 1854, which does indeed give an increase of £82,448. But the second, which refers to all other machines used in factories, records £1,368,027 for 1853 as against £1,271,503 in 1854, a reduction of £96,524. For the two headings taken together there is thus a deficit of £14,076. This detail is typical of the Manchester School. They believe that the present time is favourable for the abolition of the restriction existing in favour of factory workers, i.e., the legal restriction on the working time of young people below 18, of women and of children under 12. To achieve so elevated an aim, a few figures can well be falsified.

But, if we believe the *Manchester Examiner*, the special organ of the Quaker Bright, as well as the reports coming from the industrial regions, foreign markets, those traditional outlets for the surplus of our factories, are creaking under the weight of our overproduction and overspeculation. If we have reached such a congestion of the world market in spite of the opening up of two fabulous new markets, in Australia and California, in spite of the electric telegraph which has transformed the whole of Europe into an immense trading exchange, in spite of the railways and steamships which have infinitely extended communications, and so trade, how much time would the crisis have waited before coming if the employers had been authorised to operate 18 hours a day instead of 11?

The question is too simple for us to

(1) Britain was then governed by a Coalition between the Whigs and the "Peelites", or pro-Free Trade Tories, one of whom, Gladstone, was Chancellor of the Exchequer.

need to give the answer. But the relatively quicker breaking out of the crisis would not have been the only difference. A whole generation of workers would have lost 50 per cent of their physical strength, intellectual development and ability to live. This same Manchester School, which replies to our scruples "Should this torment torment us, since it increases our pleasure?" (2), weeps and wails, with sentimental lamentations, about the sacrifice of human lives which the war against Russia, every war, costs! In a few days we will hear Mr. Cobden protest in Leeds against this mutual slaughter of Christians. And, in a few weeks, we will hear him in Parliament protest against the restrictions which prevent human lives being consumed too quickly in the factories. But, of all heroic gestures, only one seems justified to him: Herod's massacre of the innocents.

We agree with the Manchester School that the need for a legal limit on the daily working day in no way indicates a high degree of social development. But, in our view, the fault lies not in the laws, but in the state of affairs which makes them necessary.

(First published in German in the *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, 20 January 1855.)

(2) A line from a poem by Goethe.

DEATH OF HUME

The death of Hume has deprived the House of Commons of its father. His long parliamentary career was the exact barometer of the bourgeois Radical party which was at its height in 1831. A kind of Warwick or maker of MPs in the first years of the reformed House, he was, eight(1) years later, along with Daniel O'Connell and Feargus O'Connor, one of the authors of the People's Charter which still today constitutes the political programme of the Chartists and which basically amounts to a demand for universal suffrage and the conditions for putting it into prac-

tice in Britain. The split which soon occurred between the workers and the bourgeois agitators found Hume on the side of the latter. At the time of the Russell Ministry, he drew up a "little Charter", which was adopted as a programme by those called the "parliamentary and financial reformers".

In place of the six points of the People's Charter, it only contained three points, replacing the demand for universal suffrage with a demand merely for a wider franchise. Finally, in 1852, Hume announced a new programme, in which he gave up his little Charter and only demanded one point: election by ballot. In short, Hume was the classic representative of the opposition called "independent" which Cobbett characterised excellently and definitively as the "safety valve" of the old system. In his old age he had a veritable mania for putting down motions and then withdrawing them, on a sign from Ministers, just before the doors closed. He employed his talents, as everyone knows, "to save public money". All the Ministers allowed him to fight against the small expenses so that the big expenses passed all the more completely. (First published in German in the *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, 28 February 1855.)

(1) The Charter was in fact drawn up in 1838, which is six, not eight years after the election of the first Parliament on the basis of the 1832 Reform Act.

CONFLICT BETWEEN WORKERS AND CAPITALISTS

In a previous correspondence we stated "the conflict between the industrial proletariat and the bourgeoisie will begin again at the same time as the conflict between bourgeoisie and aristocracy reaches its climax". (1) Tangible proof of this statement was provided at a big meeting held last Friday in the London Tavern. Before giving a report of this meeting, (2) we will say a few words on the skirmishes which have taken place

recently, outside and inside Parliament, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Just recently the Manchester factory owners have organised meetings at which they decided to launch a campaign for the abolition of the official Factory Inspectors, on the grounds that these inspectors have not confined themselves to seeing that the legal working day is observed but have had the effrontery to insist that the safety measures laid down by Parliament for avoiding accidents and death to workers from machinery are effectively enforced in the factories. The Factory Inspector for South Lancashire, the famous Leonard Horner, has attracted their particular hostility because in his latest report he strongly called for a safety measure to be legally enforced whose absence, according to the naive admission of one factory owner, naturally a member of the Peace Society, "only cost last year the lives of five workers".

That is what happened outside Parliament. The House of Commons rejected, on Second Reading, Sir John Halford's Bill to make illegal "stoppage of wages". It is thus that are called the deductions made from nominal wages, either because the worker has infringed some regulation laid down by the employer or because, in industries where the modern system has not yet been introduced, he has to pay a rent for the hire of the looms, etc.

This latter is especially the case in Nottingham in the hosiery industry. Sir John Halford showed that in many cases the worker instead of being paid by the contractor is forced to pay him money. So many deductions are made on various pretexts from the nominal wage that in the end the worker has to pay more than is due to him from the capitalist. The worker thus becomes the debtor of his employer who then obliges him to renew his contract on more and more unfavourable terms, to such an extent that he has become, in the full meaning of the word, a real serf, without however, like other serfs, having his material existence guaranteed.

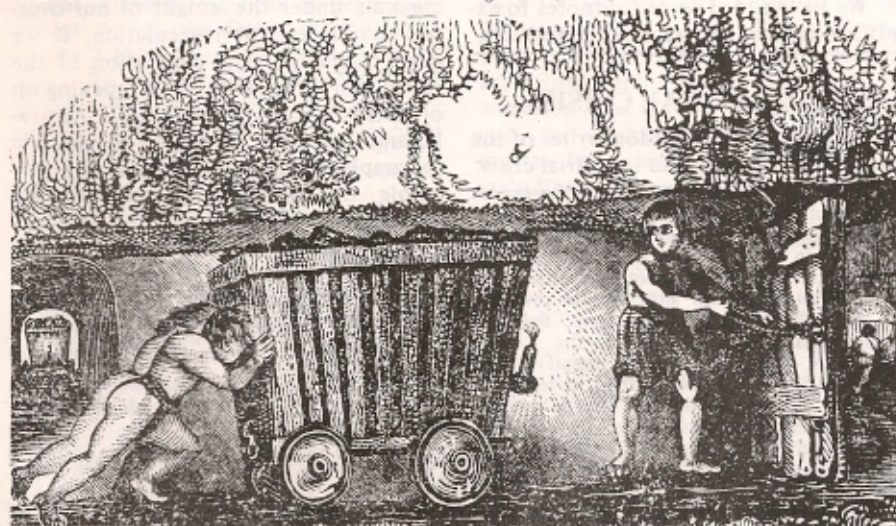
While it rejected on Second Reading Sir John Halford's Bill to end this abuse, the House of Commons did not even consider the Bill proposed by Cobbett, the son of the great English pamphleteer. This Bill aimed 1. to replace the 1850 10 1/2-hours Act by the 1847 10 hours Act; 2. to make really effective the legal limitation of the working day in the factories by the compulsory stopping of the machines at the end of each legal working day.

(Final part of an article first published in German in the *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, 22 March 1855. The title is ours.)

(1) In an article "The British Constitution" that appeared in the NOZ on 6 March 1855. English translation in Pelican *Marx Surveys from Exile*, pp. 281-4.

(2) This report was published in the NOZ on 24 March 1855. English translation in Marx-Engels *Articles on Britain*, pp. 227-30.

Illustration from the book "The white slaves of England" (1853)



What is marxian economics?

At the moment output is falling, unemployment is growing, prices are rising—all things that no one wants to happen, but which nevertheless do. What this means is that the human social activity of producing and distributing wealth is not under the conscious control of human beings. They do not control the conditions under which they produce and distribute wealth but, on the contrary, are subject to laws which, while not themselves laws of nature, operate as if they were, as an external force governing human activities. Economics is precisely the study of "the laws" which govern human activity in the field of wealth production and distribution.

An important point must be made straight away: economic laws only come into operation under certain social circumstances—when, in fact, the production and distribution of wealth is not under conscious social control. When, as today, the means of production are monopolised by a section only of society and are used to produce wealth to be sold on a market with a view to profit. In other words, economic laws are the laws of capitalist production and they will not operate when capitalism has been abolished through the establishment of socialism (when production will be for the direct use of the whole community). This is why we said that these laws are not natural laws.

To say that they are would be to assume that capitalism was the natural form of human society. Which is the mistake made by the early theorists of economics or "political economy" as it was then called, such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo who Marx criticised for doing so. Indeed this is what Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* (the title of a book he published in 1859 as well as the sub-title of *Capital*) basically amounts to. Nevertheless, as long as capitalism exists, these laws exist and operate just like natural laws; they govern human activity in the field of wealth production and distribution and act as external constraints on what humans can do.

An understanding of these laws is very important; it is in fact a basic part of our case since it leads to the conclusion that capitalism just cannot be reformed so as to serve the common interest and therefore must be abolished if today's social problems are to be solved. Our interest in economics is simply to understand how capitalism works, and not at all to recommend policies for governments to pursue. This is an important point since "economics" and "economists" today are regarded, and regard themselves, as policy advisers.

How, then, does capitalism work? The man who first analysed this in an adequate way was Karl Marx in his work *Capital*, first published in German in 1867. He wrote a number of other works on economics too, but the best introduction is the talk he gave in 1865 which was published after his death under the title *Value, Price and Profit* (also known, in some reprints, as *Wages, Price and Profits*). As far as economics is concerned, we are Marxists as Marxian economics is an integral part of our theory.

If you look at the way capitalism works, the first thing that strikes you is that everything is bought and sold. Goods are all produced to be sold and nobody can get what he wants or needs except by buying it. Capitalism, then, is a buying and selling society in which wealth takes the form of an immense accumulation of items for sale, or *commodities*. This is why Marx begins his analysis of the capitalist mode of production by examining the commodity. A commodity is not simply an item of wealth, something useful; it is an item of wealth that has been produced for exchange, for sale. Com-

modities were of course also produced before capitalism existed, but in the past were only a secondary feature. Capitalism is the commodity society par excellence, where everything, including the mental and physical energies of human beings, is bought and sold.

Commodities exchange with each other in fixed proportions and Marx set out to discover what determined the exchange-value of a commodity, what determined, in other words, the proportions in which they exchange one for another. He came to the conclusion that the exchange-value of a commodity was determined by the amount of socially necessary labour needed to produce and reproduce it. This Labour Theory of Value is the basis of Marxian economics and without a knowledge of it it is impossible to adequately understand the other aspects of capitalist economic life such as money, prices, the rate of profit and crises.

This theory is explained in the pamphlet *Some Aspects of Marxian Economics* which we have just published and which is available for 40p from our Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Five myths about marxism

MYTH ONE

That Marxism can best be understood by examining the views of Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Castro, Mugabe or Paul Foot.

These people have all distorted Marxism to fit in with their own policies. The Russian, Chinese and Cuban revolutions were not Marxist revolutions, but were minority coups d'état organised upon similar lines to the Jacobin insurrection of 1789. The press label all sorts of cranks, reformers and opportunists as

Marxists. Don't just accept the label; examine what these so-called Marxists are saying: nine times out of ten you will find that they are not Marxists, but Leninists.

MYTH TWO

That Marxism means state control of industry.

Nationalisation has nothing to do with the socialist order of society which Marx stood for. Marx, and his collaborator Engels, regarded Bismarck's policies of state control as "a spurious kind of socialism"—not socialism at all. What Marxists want is a society in which the machinery of wealth production and distribution is commonly owned and democratically controlled. Marxism is as opposed to state ownership as to private ownership.

MYTH THREE

That you have to have a degree in philosophy before you can read Marx.

Not so—in fact a degree in philosophy can sometimes be an obstacle to understanding the way in which the world is organised. Marx is a very readable

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writer. "The Communist Manifesto" is an excellent brief introduction to the ideas of Marxism. "Wage Labour and Capital" and "Value, Price and Profit" explain the basic points of Marx's important economic theories. But you can become a socialist without reading a word of Marx.

MYTH FOUR

That Marxism has been proved wrong by the developments of the last hundred years.

It is claimed by some apologists for capitalism that Marx's analysis of the way in which capitalism must work is false because the squalid poverty of the last century no longer exists (they forget that Marx was analysing *world* capitalism). These people claim that a majority are now happy with their lives under capitalism. But can anyone really believe that, while millions are unemployed, millions are starving to death, millions are homeless and millions of pounds are spent daily on armaments? Capitalism is now more than ever a problem-producing society and the cause of the problems is still as pointed out by Marx.

MYTH FIVE

That Marxism is a religion or dogma to be swallowed whole and adhered to faithfully.

Dogmatism is the very antithesis of Marxism: the former is based upon the certainty of static knowledge, while the latter concerns the dynamics of materialism. Socialists do not accept everything that Marx said and did: much of it was wrong and anti-socialist. We do not treat Marx as our god. Marxism is simply a tool to be used in critical thinking.

S COLEMAN

Running Commentary



Who does Denis menace?

Strange things happen to Labour politicians when they are out of office. They begin to get very concerned about unemployment and rising prices and cuts in public services and poverty and slums—as if these social problems had not been prominent while they were in office.

Occasionally they strike rebellious poses—a tired throwback to the days when they were more misled than hypocritical. At such times they are capable of saying the most surprising, or the most dishonest things. Consider, for example, the recent words of Denis Healey, Labour's ex-Chancellor famous for his axe-swinging, union bashing, wage claim stifling act. All through his time at the Treasury, Healey struggled to hold wages down; his dying demand as Chancellor was that workers should accept rises of at most 5 per cent at a time when prices were going up at something like 10 per cent a year.

But now that his bottom is warming a seat on the opposition benches Healey seems to see things in a different light. Refusing to cross a picket line of striking technicians at Capital Radio, he explained: "I do not believe in strike-breaking". He did not, as far as we know, add that he also does not believe in upsetting trade unions at the very time that he is in the running for election to the Labour Party leadership. It is not so long ago that the government of which Healey was a prominent member used troops to break the firemen's strike and was almost daily denouncing workers who were combining to get better wages. Towards the end, such was their fervour in the battle against strikers that some ministers were openly encouraging workers to break picket lines.

Workers should not be misled by Healey's sweet words now: his interest remains, as it was, to protect the privileged position of the British ruling class. If workers are misled enough to forget recent history and to give Labour another spell in power they will rapidly realise, as they survey the wreckage of their hopes, that nothing has changed.

Not Vestey taxing

The queues at Dewhursts the Butchers must have positively reeled under the weight of the customers' sarcasm after the disclosure of the massive legal tax-avoidance dodges operated by the Vestey family.

Workers are very sensitive on this issue; seeing on each pay slip an apparent deduction for income tax, and reading on sales tickets the dread words "Plus VAT", they not unreasonably come to the conclusion that they pay taxes. They further conclude that anyone who avoids paying taxes is thrusting a greater burden on the rest. From these first fallacies they argue that things like roads, nationalised industries and armed forces are actually paid for out of their wages. Some workers go so far as to imagine that they are share-holders in an enterprise called Great Britain Ltd. except that they never actually receive any dividends. What escapes them is the fact that, whatever the size of their wage, it is generally what is needed to reproduce their energies as a class—and this holds good however much or how little tax they see deducted from each payment.

So who does pay taxes? Or who does not when they should, as in the case of the Vestey family? Something of an answer to that question was contained in an indignant editorial in the *Sunday Times*, which first publicised the Vestey fiddle:

... its (the Vestey family) members have enjoyed the considerable pleasures of being rich in England without contributing anything near their fair share to the defences which kept those pleasures in being—against foreign enemies in wartime, against disorder and disease in time of peace.

This passage, perhaps unwittingly, illustrates the reasons for the existence of the armed and police forces, for the entire state apparatus: to preserve the rights and the privileges of capitalists like the Vestey family. It also implies that those same capitalists are obliged to pay for that apparatus; after all, even the *Sunday Times* is not daft enough to suggest that people who try to enjoy being *poor* in England pay to defend the pleasures of the Vestey family.

Workers who wax indignant at the self-image of them being robbed by the tax man would do better to consider the legalised robbery on which capitalist society is actually based. Much better, to talk about *that* in the meat queue.

Superboring

To judge from the overwhelmingly popular reading matter on any tube train or in any 'bus queue, many people are not aware that reading certain newspapers can seriously damage their health. One danger, for example, is the development of chronic blind spots about society. At a time when, to take only two facts, some 15 million children die each year from the effects of mal-

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nutrition while the nuclear powers cosset the capability to destroy much of what we are encouraged to call civilised life, those same newspapers prefer to devote much of their space to crushingly boring non-issues.

There is, to begin with, the question of who Prince Charles will marry and whether, when he eventually gets to the altar, he will be capable of consummating the union so that the newspapers can have some more fun about a royal offspring. This matter commands a lot of attention in the popular press although it is about as relevant and meaningful as a London Transport bus timetable.

Then there has been another battle of suitors of a different kind—the epic struggle between Peter Cadbury and Lord Harris over who shall be boss of Westward Television, settled at last when Cadbury threw in the towel. Support for one side or the other in the non-history making event was determined by which contestant, in the opinion of the voting shareholder, offered the better chance of getting Westward's licence to print money renewed by the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Lord Harris was second-in-command at the Home Office during the Labour government; he did not become famous for any tolerant attitude towards the working class while he was there and prisoners hoping to get out a bit early were not cheered when, just before Labour were kicked out of office, the Home Secretary appointed Harris Chairman of the Parole Board. He was given a big job at Westward by Cadbury, in the hope that someone so much in the know would be able to do a lot to ensure the renewal of Westward's franchise.

The battle between these two representatives of the capitalist class had little promise, not even one to change the style of the TV programmes with which tired workers are wont to renew their energies during their off-work periods. Yet the media found the story of endless fascination, fit subject for much analysis and comment. Do the workers not resent being fed this sort of drivel? Are they satisfied, to be told that this is all they are able to absorb? Is there no limit to the weight of insults which, along with their exploitation, can be heaped on their heads?

nothing more worth protecting than the British Heritage.

One of the latest in this line is Leonardo da Vinci's *Codex Leicester*, a portfolio of notes and drawings about water and cosmology. This manuscript is owned by the family of the Earl of Leicester of Holkham Hall, Norfolk and there promises to be some desperate agonising when it goes up for auction at Christies in December. For one thing, such is its rarity that even the art experts have no idea of its price; that is why it is going for auction, where it may fetch £4 million, or £8 million, or £10 million...

While the trade was getting its breath back, Arts Minister Norman St. John Stevas, already famous for his garish shirts and his giggling, stepped boldly forward to defend the British Heritage. "I would", he exclaimed, "be very annoyed if this work of Leonardo's left the country... I am determined to do all I can and use every means". The *Guardian* warned of the work being in "grave danger" of being exported—as if once it left these shores it would disintegrate—and the *Daily Telegraph* reported criticisms of "greedy and inconsiderate" auctioneers operating on the accepted capitalist principle of making as much money as they can as fast as possible.

There need be no surprise that in all this excitement, overlaid as it was by a froth of frustrated patriotism, some important facts have been overlooked. Nobody seemed interested in asking whether this phrase, the "British Heritage" had any meaning and, if it had, what relationship it could possibly have to the work of a mediaeval Italian. Nobody wondered whether any Italians had been as "annoyed" as Stevas, when the manuscript was originally exported from that country. Nobody particularly cared how, or why it came to belong to the Earl of Leicester. Although Holkham Hall is open to the public in the summer, the *Codex* was not on view but nobody asked whether it might be more widely seen if it were sent abroad.

The Leonardo manuscript came into the possession of a former holder of the title of Earl of Leicester—whose family name was Coke—in 1717. When the Earl died in 1759 the title became extinct and the estates at Holkham were inherited by his great nephew Thomas Wenman who, perhaps in gratitude, marked the event by changing his name to Coke. When he died in 1776 Holkham passed to his son Thomas who, after the customary schooling at Eton followed by a Grand Tour, returned to England on a breath of mannered scandal to inherit not only the estate but also the Parliamentary seat for Norfolk.

At that time the Holkham lands were unenclosed and poorly cultivated, growing rye and supporting inferior livestock. After enclosure Coke, in the agricultural boom of the Napoleonic Wars, invested a small fortune in their

Leonardo for sale

The British Empire, which not only killed but also strove most officiously to keep alive, has been dead for some time. No longer are there school room maps which, with Britain at their centre, colour one third of the world's surface red. No longer do pith-helmeted Tommies form defiant squares against naked, capering savages. No longer do the grim, grey battleships of the Royal Navy steam through the Channel mists, keeping at bay those hordes of gesticulating, treacherous foreigners.

These are now historical jokes, material for trendy satirists or playwrights hoping to make their name by an exposure of the personal frailties of the Empire builders. But some of the other symptoms of British capitalism's decline we are still encouraged to take seriously and to regret. Among these is the sale and the export of works of art by owners in this country to buyers abroad—which, we are told, threatens something called the British Heritage.

This threat has in fact been at work for about a century but it was not until 1952 that it was officially recognised and since then there has been a sort of system for checking, delaying and perhaps stopping the export of works of art. The system does not, need it be said, embrace such objects as the mahogany aspidistra stand which has languished in some working class home in Mafeking Street, Fulham, since grandma got it as a wedding present. Items

come into the system only when, apart from anything else, they are worth over £8,000.

They are then investigated by various "experts" who may advise the Minister of Arts to use his powers to delay the export. If a British collection can then offer as much as the export price, the Minister may refuse an export licence and the work stays in this country. In practice comparatively few objects are scrutinised by the "experts" and as a result there is a steady flow of them from Britain which, while it may satisfy the sellers and the dealers who rake in their commission, is alarming to all those people who think that there is



development from a sandy rabbit warren into a thriving agricultural workshop, visited by admirers from all over Europe. He raised the rent roll from £2,000 to £22,000 and won the support of his tenants by giving them security of tenure, although under some fairly rigid controls. Not that there were that many tenants left, after the enclosures: "I look around", Coke told an Enquiry in 1808 "And can see no other house than mine. I am like the ogre in the tale, and have eaten up all my neighbours."

Coke was a staunch opponent of George III and was what is called a sportsman, which means that he hunted enthusiastically and was able to slaughter an impressive quantity of game birds with his guns. At the age of 68 he married for the second time and of this marriage there were five sons and a daughter. He was raised to the peerage in 1837, reviving the old title and becoming another first Earl of Leicester. The present Earl lives in South Africa and Holkham is inhabited by his son, Lord Coke, who elaborates on the Palladian splendours of the place:

It has marvellous paintings by Rubens, Clause, Van Dyck and other masters; Greek and Roman sculpture; one of the finest private libraries in the country; and furniture designed by William Kent.

All these treasures come from, and are perpetuated by, the exploitation of socially inferior people. The first Earl of Leicester refined and intensified that process to the limits of the knowledge and the equipment available to him in his day. Not that the exploited have ever objected; Coke's tenants collected the money to raise a monument to him, after his death and there is little reason to think that working class attitudes are significantly different today. We need not weep for the Leicesters; typical of their class, they enjoy the best things in life and are tossing out only one of the treasures they have amassed, if perhaps the most valuable.

This is part of an historic process. Art objects have commonly been bought, or plundered, by a dominant class as an investment, or as an act of conspicuous consumption or simply as an expression of their dominance. With the rise of British capitalism—in the days of Thomas Coke—Britain was the world leader in manufacture, trade and imperialist expansion. The great houses of the ruling class were enriched with priceless works of art from all over the world. With the decline, it is all draining away, often to the homes of some newly rising capitalist class abroad. "If we did not sell the Leonardo manuscript," said Lord Coke, "other things would have to be sold."

It is a curious process of reasoning, which encourages the class whose exploitation has yielded the wealth of people like the Leicesters to bemoan British capitalism's decline and to wring their hands over the symptoms of that

decline. There is a pronounced illogicality in the idea that one country should construct a "heritage" which includes works of art originating elsewhere. If the term "national heritage" means anything then the works of Rubens and Van Dyck should not be at Holkham Hall but somewhere in Belgium and those sculptures should be packed off back to Greece and Italy.

Except that there is a wider, more fundamental question. It is typical of the tensions of property society, that even inanimate objects should be given a nationality and that a work like the *Codex Leicester*, which scrutinises

natural forces common to the entire human environment, should be considered a fit matter for an exclusive, private possession. It is typical, too, that the prospect of this work passing from one privacy to another should ferment such hysteria.

What would Leonardo have thought, to see his works being obscured by fat cheque books and frantic jingoism? Who now can argue that capitalism liberates human talents which would be stifled and distorted in a society of common ownership and free access? Tell that, if you can, to Leonardo. . .

IVAN

News from nowhere

Samuel Butler's biting satire *Erewhon* (an anagram of "nowhere"), published in 1872, describes the sort of society found by the narrator in a remote mythical land in the Antipodes. A curious feature of erewhonian culture was its paradoxical reversal of moral values. For example, a physical ailment such as pulmonary consumption was punished as a crime while embezzlement called for condolence—for the embezzler!

Now you might wonder why on earth such a piece of fiction, fascinating though it may be, should be mentioned in a no-nonsense political journal like the *Socialist Standard*. Well fact can sometimes be stranger than fiction—certainly as far as politics is concerned.

One of the more amusing clichés our politicians are prone to using is that little gem: "the Real World". Presumably it is intended to reflect upon themselves as hard-headed, realistic people grappling with complex social issues in a cool, commonsense fashion. Invoking the "Real World" in political debate is rather like invoking "God" or "Allah" in some Holy War: it has a definite propaganda value, both for self defence and to discomfort one's enemies. Thus it can serve, for example, to rationalise and excuse the politician's failure to "deliver the goods" by suggesting that the "Real World", with its rising oil prices and cheap foreign imports, is rather more refractory and unyielding than they had bargained for. On the other hand, it enables them to dismiss their opponents' views as unworkable, utopian and out of touch with that "real world" which they with their vast experience in repeated political failures and broken pledges, are so intimately acquainted with.

A few months ago, ex-MP Shirley Williams was caught in the act, exposing the machinations of her politician's mind to readers of the *Guardian* (May 19). She complained of the way in which the image and reality (of politicians) are constantly confused by the media—a somewhat odd complaint from a political conjuror whose pro-

fession is so vitally concerned with the creation and manipulation of images—of themselves, their opponents or their scapegoats.

Through television, they (politicians) become images—actors in some drama called politics—and the fact that they are real men and women operating in a real world is easily obscured.

Ah, that quaint little cliché again! But possibly Williams is obscuring a fact or two here herself about the nature of the "Real World"? Consider the reason she gives for her concern over the media: "Democracies die unless people have some trust in those they elect to represent them and to lead them." In her view the media tends, in certain ways, to undermine this trust.

What she is suggesting is that democracy hinges on the apparent conduct of leaders. Presumably then if a leader chose to flout the wishes of the electorate and thus undermine their trust, he or she would be able to get away with it either because public opinion would be compelled to adapt itself to undemocratic views or it counts for nothing anyway and can be safely ignored. Either way such a view implies that society is like putty, to be moulded at will by a few prominent individuals or "great men". Why, in that case, bother about the whole rigmarole of democracy, one might well ask?

This is indicative of the contempt in which politicians hold us. We count simply as voting fodder to be cynically



used in the game of power politics, incapable of creative self-assertion, of democratically organising ourselves without patronising politicians seeking our "trust". They are the most ardent devotees of the "great man" theory, in their assessment of fellow leaders. In their generous claims as to the historic significance of some public figure they flatter themselves in the knowledge that they act out a similar role.

The "great man" theory, however is based, in Plekhanov's words, on an "optical illusion". Great men are themselves the products of the sort of society they live in, of given social forces that are used by them to effect social change. Whatever influence their personalities have it is exercised within these fundamental constraints. Is it really surprising then, given the basic lack of democratic control over social affairs in capitalism, that this should be reflected in the inflated, grandiose images political leaders have assumed, images whose source—society itself—they seek to play down by attributing their stature to qualities vested in their own personalities. The fact that they seek mass support, disposes of such pretensions as fiction but ironically it is on the strength of such fictions that they solicit support. What else could the call for a "strong leader" be?

No matter. The fantasies of politicians would be of small account except for the fact that they are shared by the working class—without whose support the politicians would not be in power—and are reflected by and through the media, which cannot be blamed for any lack of trust the public feels towards its "leaders". The leaders themselves invite the distrust and cynicism by entertaining illusions about their capacity to solve capitalism's inevitable problems. Illusions that are without foundation in the "real world".

This problem of credibility the leaders attempt to overcome by the tactic of finding some readily recognisable scapegoat for society's ills. The more credible the scapegoat, the less incredible will seem the politicians' claims to be able to legislate away those social ills in the face of their continuation, or even aggravation.

Take for example the problem of inflation, which has greatly concerned our political masters in the post-war era—particularly since the early seventies.

The search for a scapegoat has inevitably focussed on the working class. Typical of the sort of view expressed on the matter was Jo Grimond's contribution to a Commons debate on the cost of living: "When production hardly rises, pay increases inevitably lead to inflation. That is not the discovery of Professor Friedman but commonsense" (*Guardian*, 15 April).

In other words, "greedy workers" are to blame—despite the fact that between 1850 and 1892 average wages rose by 62 per cent (*Study of Prices* Layton and Crowther), while prices fell by 8 per cent—in defiance of the "laws of commonsense", it would seem.

Others can be more blunt in their criticism. Recently the "Iron Lady" herself, before an assembled conference of several hundred well-heeled and rather indignant Tory women, rounded on workers putting in for high wage claims and behaving "selfishly". It is curious that a believer in the market economy's capacity to perform wonders by motivating individuals on the basis of competitive self-interest, should reproach workers for behaving accordingly. And this from someone who is forever talking about the need to give workers "greater incentives" (which on the face of it, is what a large pay rise would presumably provide)—that is, to stimulate what she and those who think like her would call "greed".

But moralising is not restricted to avowed defenders of capitalism. The saying that the Labour Party owes more to Methodism than to Marxism, probably explains its long-established tradition of viewing what it calls socialism as a sort of act of charity forever being obstructed by mean, unsympathetic financiers in the City.

The fake revolutionaries on the left are no better. In its pocket pamphlet No. 1, enigmatically entitled *Do Wages Cause Inflation?* the Socialist Workers' Party argues that "Wage rises don't cause inflation—the big companies raise prices to protect their profits". This time it's the greedy capitalist who is to blame. The pamphlet goes on to point out that the "bosses won't invest if their profits are too low". This is undoubtedly what Paul Foot, that ubiquitous guru of the SWP, had in mind when, on a *Question Time* TV program (22 May), he explained why the world's productive potential was far from being used up. It was, he said, because of the greed of the wealthy. Apparently then, when production is held back for lack of profit it is due to greed but it is also greed which causes production to go ahead by ensuring profits through raising prices! Paul Foot would do well to heed Engels' remark:

Whoever declares that the capitalist mode of production, the "iron laws" of present-day bourgeois society, are inviolable and yet at the same time would like to abolish their unpleasant but necessary consequence has no other recourse but to deliver

moral sermons to the capitalists, moral sermons whose emotional effects immediately evaporate under the influence of private interest and, if necessary, of competition (*The Housing Question*).

Society today is based upon the ownership and control of the means of living by a small minority. The rest of us, the workers, produce all the wealth and in doing so create a greater value than we receive back in the form of wages and salaries—the surplus value being appropriated by the owners of capital. Marx described succinctly the relationship between profit and wages:

They stand in inverse ratio to each other. Capital's share, profit, rises in the same proportion as labour's share, wages, falls, and vice versa. Profit rises to the extent that wages fall; it falls to the extent that wages rise (*Wage Labour and Capital*)

In the language of the moralist, this means that the "less greedy" the workers are, the "more greedy" are the capitalists, and vice versa.

Moralists should take a look at history. How would they account for the period of deflation, 1921-31, when both prices and wages fell by roughly 30 per cent? Could it be that the impoverished British working class was mysteriously seized by an overpowering feeling of generosity towards the capitalists above and beyond the normal call of duty in generously providing profits for them? As any historian will know, that was an era of high militant activity and industrial unrest. And yet if you hold the view that the level of wage claims determines the general price level, what other conclusion is open to you?

Inflation is, in fact, the consequence of government-authorised excess printing of inconvertible paper currency. Workers do not have access to the printing press but it suits governments to represent an inevitable consequence of their inflationary policies—high wage claims to maintain real living standards against a background of spiralling prices—as the cause of inflation.

Socialists have been called utopian. Utopia however simply means "no place" and only in this sense is socialism a utopia, for indeed it exists nowhere in the world at present. But while socialism is the practical fulfilment of the material interests ("greed", if you like) of the working class, the dream world that occupies the minds of politicians is incapable of realisation. The real world we all live in—even politicians—is one in which the interests of the buyers and sellers of labour power, are locked in fundamental and irreconcilable conflict and cannot be harmonised except in the distorted imagination.

Next time one of these pious paragons of virtue rises heavily from some overburdened banquet table to lecture the workers on why they ought to "tighten their belts" in these days of economic gloom, remember that.

ROBIN COX



OPEN LETTER TO LABOUR SUPPORTERS

Labour's power struggle

The squalid battle which presently dominates the Labour Party is nothing but an unprincipled power struggle. The newspaper headline writers may endeavour to convince their readers that profound political issues are at stake, but the back-stabbing and the vote-rigging of the Conference floor at Blackpool last month fully justify the mistrust and hostility which socialists feel towards the Labour Party. Since 1904—two years before the formation of the Labour Party—the Socialist Party of Great Britain has stood opposed to the conservatism and gradualism of Labour. This open letter is not intended as a means of advising Labourites how to settle their internal disorders, but is simply meant to make clear the nature of the present conflict and to offer some advice to any workers who still believe that the Labour Party can get society out of the mess it is in.

We are told that what went on in Blackpool last month, and will be continued elsewhere in January, is about party democracy. It is not. Not a single voice in the Labour Party has been raised in favour of real democracy. Democracy means the absence of leadership; it means equality between members; it means completely open meetings and no internal secrecy; it means freedom to speak openly without fear of persecution; it means common control of party finances. Now then, who in the Labour Party is advocating that?

Who has advocated that in order to democratise the Labour Party they should no longer have a Leader and a bunch of platform chiefs? If anyone did, the leaders who are currently participating in the mock battle would soon tell them where to get off. What the so-called democrats in the Labour Party want is a say in who will lead them; that is quite different from not wanting to be led at all. The truth is that the sheep of Labour's rank and file accept the old myth that nothing can be done without leaders. It is pathetic to see adults, claiming to be socialists, fighting for power—not for themselves and their class, but for a crowd of Labour Leaders.

There is no equality of membership in the Labour Party. The weighted votes which are given to the trade unions are a blatant political bribe in return for money to pay for the party's upkeep. Local activists cannot and do not have a significant say in the party's policy-making. Year after year a fresh-faced new delegate is seen to alight the Conference rostrum to put in a desperate plea for "socialist policies". These are sincere young workers whose cries of hope are treated with derision by the

men of power in whom they have placed their trust.

Who in the Labour Party has demanded that their National Executive Committee meetings be open to the public? The EC of the SPGB is open to anyone, member or non-member, at 52 Clapham High Street at 7.30pm any Tuesday evening. Which Labour "democrats" have suggested that their conference be modelled on the scrupulously democratic form adopted by the SPGB



LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND SOCIALISM

It has been an argument of long standing among Labour Party supporters that the activities of their party, even if not directly concerned with socialism, are justified because they are leading towards it. They have ridiculed our policy of working directly for socialism as "impossibilism". Mr. Ramsay MacDonald repeated this justification for the Labour Party at its conference at Llandudno, in October. He said:

The Government's pledges were those of socialists convinced that the capitalist system cannot be made to work. If his opponents objected that the government had not reached the socialist goal, he answered 'No, we haven't, but we are going to get there'.

Mr. MacDonald's statement is hardly compatible with Mr. J. H. Thomas's admission at the Conference of the National Union of Railwaymen on 5 July 1929, that the Government proposed to tackle the unemployment problem "While accepting the present order of society". Nor does it fit in with the significant fact that the Liberals put the Labour Government into office, keep them there, and are carrying on friendly, secret discussions with them. Are we to believe that Mr. Lloyd George and his party would support a Government which is going towards socialism?

* * * * *

To retain capitalism is a practicable policy, although an unsatisfactory one from a working class standpoint. To abolish capitalism and establish socialism will be practicable as soon as the working class have been won over to socialism. The Labour Party has sought to justify a third policy, which is that of trying to abolish the evils of capitalism while keeping the system itself. Events are proving that the task is an impossible one.

From an editorial "The Labour Government and Socialism", *Socialist Standard* November 1930.)

—a model of party democracy in action? When has a Labourite ever suggested that half-yearly accounts of party finances should be presented for the scrutiny of the membership? That is how we do things in the SPGB. A socialist party need keep no secrets from its members or from the workers in general.

The TV pictures of the Blackpool Conference showed just how much the majority of the delegates cared about democratic principles. When Sir John Boyd of the AEUW refused to consult his fellow delegates about how to cast the union vote on a non-mandated motion, when Leftists from the constituencies shouted down the Callaghan sycophant, Andrew Faulds, when Eric Heffer moved a resolution on 2 October and said "I formally move this motion, but I haven't got a clue what I'm moving"—was that what Labour Party democracy is all about?

It is claimed that the future of Labour Party policy is at stake. Anthony Wedgwood Benn says that the so-called Right wing of the party want to turn it into a second Tory party. But it already is a second Tory Party insofar as most of its members support the same social system that Thatcher stands for. Shadow Defence Secretary, Bill Rodgers, has said that the party must be saved from extremism, whatever that may mean. Rodgers warns against the dangers of Benn, Benn poses as the guardian of some non-existent principles, the members clap their hands together, some for one leader, some for another, but none for themselves.

The Labour Leaders stand for one common principle and that is the principle of getting power by any means. They want a share in the running of British capitalism. They need votes to get them power. They need active suckers to go out and get them votes. Not one of the combatants in the battle for power wants an end to capitalism. The argument is about how to run it. More or less power for the state—nuclear arms or conventional warfare—higher or lower taxes—alliance with America or Russia—these are the petty issues that workers are being asked to get steamed up about.

In recent weeks and months there has been a concerted effort to portray Anthony Wedgwood Benn as an uncompromising socialist. His friends have painted him as the leader of a socialist tradition in the Labour Party; his enemies have warned that should he succeed Jim Callaghan as leader of the Labour Party British capitalism would be under threat. Let one thing be clear: *Benn is no more of a socialist than Callaghan. Both are committed to the*



Squalid, back-stabbing, unprincipled power struggle

continued administration of capitalism. They do not oppose production for profit, nor do they stand for the common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution. It is not only the leaders who support capitalism; so do their followers. It is quite wrong to blame the leaders for Labour's anti-working class record, for it is the followers—the workers themselves—who gave Labour the stick with which to beat them.

The SPGB has no leaders. That does not mean that we are unorganised, but that we are organised along democratic lines. Workers can only join the SPGB if they understand what it stands for. Once in their party, their say is as important as the next comrade's. Our Executive Committee is only empowered to carry out the wishes of the membership. The *Socialist Standard* is owned and controlled by the party as a whole. The SPGB does not just talk about democracy, we practise it.

The Labour Party is in a mess. While capitalism's latest crisis produces tragic consequences for the working class all the Labour Party can do is debate amendments to its constitution. Rhetoric is abundant, but solutions are scarce. What has Labour to say about unemployment? They foolishly blame it on Thatcher, when it is clear that unemployment doubled under the Callaghan government. The Left asks for more government money to be spent on jobs. But the state, just like any capitalist concern, will not put money raised in taxes into unprofitable industries. The Left reacts to the threat of war by calling for unilateral nuclear disarmament, just as they did twenty years ago. But pleas to governments to disarm will do no good so long as the cause of war remains.

The Labour Party has no answers to basic working class problems because it is ignorant of their cause. Socialists are concerned with causation, with how capitalism works, what socialism means

and how to create a new order of society. This requires a reasoned, analytical approach based upon the method of materialism. The SPGB urges our fellow workers to seriously consider this alternative approach to politics.

Unless you take the revolutionary alternative you are likely to be forever locked within that Broad Church called the Labour Party. Maybe it will be reformed. If it is, what possible difference will the reforms make? If they let you choose your own leader—or if they let the NEC have a say in writing the manifesto—or even if Benn abolishes the House of Lords and closes down Eton—what difference will this make to the future of capitalism? In a few years'

time you can be sure that there will be a new crowd of rank and file radicals complaining that the leader has betrayed them and if only they could appoint the man (or woman) of their fancy socialism would be around the corner.

But chances are that the Labour Party dispute will end in dull compromise. In a few years Labour will be back in office repeating the anti-working class crimes that all Labour governments have committed to ensure the smooth running of capitalism. Come the next Labour government, whoever is Prime Minister, there will be Labour Lefties whining that principles have been betrayed; they will not have been, for Labour has no principles to betray.

The arch-opportunist leader of the Liberal Party has invited the "Labour moderates" to join his tuppenny circus. The SWP has urged the Labour Trots to come and join them on the make-believe barricades. Reg Prentice is signalling to ex-colleagues who fear for their jobs in the light of changes in the constitution to join him in the rich man's Capitalist Party. The hacks of the unions call for unity, although they do not know for what or with whom. The dogmatic time-servers of the constituencies mouth the old Labour slogans like Orwell's sheep in *Animal Farm*. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of decent working people support the Labour Party like their predecessors used to be loyal to the Church; because they think it is their only friend. Instead, it is their enemy.

STEVE COLEMAN

POLITICAL NOTES

Labour's nuclear duplicity

An article in the *Guardian* (September 25) is pretty revealing about the way the Labour Party leadership (and in particular the last Labour government of 1974-79) struggled with the task of doing all the dirty work necessary in the interests of British capitalism while at the same time keeping at arms length all those naive Labour idealists who had believed in the sincerity of their leaders' protestations—while they were in opposition.

The article is a review of a book called *Britain and Nuclear Weapons* by Laurence Freeman. The story is all too familiar. The Labour Party in opposition had said all the usual "progressive" things about disarmament, like "Ban the Bomb". When the Foots and the Benns and the rest of the slippery connemen had become the government,



the needs of British capitalism took over—including the need to replace the ageing Polaris submarines with spanking new models (and not much chance of doing a trade-in—almost unused, one

owner, immaculate trim . . .). The book "explains the embarrassed silence of the Labour Party leadership throughout the '70s while £1,000,000,000 was being spent on a new Chevaline warhead for the Royal Navy. As a separate issue, the nuclear deterrent had been quiescent for a decade. The important thing was to keep it that way, maintaining the force without drawing attention to it".

Such is the contempt of the Labour leaders for the sheep who follow them. And how justified this was, was evinced by the antics on the issue of the nuclear deterrent at the shambles which they called a Conference. Here we had these same leaders with the impudence to support more of the same CND rubbish that had been exposed for what it was by the end of the '60s. And why should they not? They knew that not a single delegate in the Winter Guardians (the pun was made by the typewriter but let it go) would tackle them on their record. It's the old story, of course. As long as workers behave not like *homo sapiens* but like sheep, they must expect their leaders to go on fleecing them.

German elections

As expected, the Social Democrat-Liberal coalition under Helmut Schmidt won the German elections at the beginning of last month. Once again we have to record the sad fact that the working class in a country have misused the power the vote gives them and have returned to power political parties pledged to maintaining the capitalist

system which is the root cause of the problems they face. For the German Social Democratic Party, despite being descended from the party which Marx and particularly Engels had mistakenly hoped could be an instrument for socialism, has long since ceased even to pretend to want to change the mixture of private and state capitalism which exists in Germany and other Western European countries.

The only surprise—though quite without significance—was the relative success of the Liberals, or "Free Democrats". At one time the possibility of them not winning any seats in the Bundestag was seriously discussed, but in the end the threat posed to them by the "ecologist" Green party came to nothing. Most of those sympathetic to the ecologists failed to put their vote where their mouth had been, a bogeyman like the demagogic Christain Democratic opposition leader, Franz-Josef Strauss, being enough to send them scuttling back to vote for the Social Democratic Party as an imagined "lesser evil".

One factor in the German workers' misuse of the vote might be that they were not encouraged to treat the election as a serious affair. Anybody visiting a German town in the weeks leading up to the election could be pardoned for thinking that he had come at Carnival time. He would not have been able to walk down a shopping street without being offered badges, balloons, stickers, wine, beer—and, maybe, even a leaflet, though most of this would have been taken up with a smiling photo of some candidate and his name in big letters plus a list of vague electoral promises.

The two big parties organised mass rallies at which the political level was no higher than at the conventions of the Republican and Democratic parties in America—brass bands, rhythmic chanting and foot-stamping and cheering whenever the great Leader—Helmut or Franz-Josef—paused, precisely to allow for pre-arranged cheering to break out. There can't even be the satisfaction of recording that a reasonable percentage chose to abstain as a vague sort of protest against this farce which the major parties made of the election. For the turn-out was over 90 per cent and of these nearly 98 per cent voted for one or other of the three major parties.

Cynicism

Following the recent assassination of the former dictator of Nicaragua, General Somoza (no tears, by request), the obituaries referred to the fact that the country had been run as a family property of the Somozas for fifty years. The founding father (founding uncle, actually) was a murderous tyrant in the best South American tradition. This Somoza's rise to power was engineered by the USA and when the

attention of the President was called to his monstrous tyranny, he replied in the immortal words: "I know he's a son of a bitch. But he's our son of a bitch". And who was this president? Nixon? Johnson? No, the great reforming New Dealer—Franklin D. Roosevelt himself.

Nuclear survival

The *Observer* (October 5) had a report from America which gave a grisly account of what was in store for those who were lucky enough to be part of the small minority who survived the holocaust of a nuclear war. With lethal doses of radiation all around, and with the impossibility of organising any sort of life amid all the destruction, the only iron rations a sensible person would have with them would be the "formula" which the Euthanasia Society is going to publish (in a booklet which it seems they dare not issue). It has of course been clear all along that even if such extreme measures as covering your head with a jacket, whitewashing the windows or—the ultimate defence—hiding under the staircase where the Angel of Death can't find you, would save you from the effects of a megaton H bomb onslaught (and obviously the writers of the government pamphlet on the subject must have been wetting themselves laughing while they were writing), you would be awfully jealous of those who were lucky enough to have been killed and free from the pain of life in this capitalist vale of tears.

Not that this has prevented a mini-boom in nuclear shelters—there is, as they say, one born every minute. And a man called Popkiss—the son of a Chief Constable, no less—has, according to the *Guardian*, published a book whose first edition has sold out (get your order in for one of the next edition at once). Scorning the government measures as quite inadequate, Popkiss gives better instructions for the lucky readers. This includes methods of getting to the countryside as soon as Armageddon starts. This is going to be difficult, it seems, because the authorities will block the roads with their traffic and their tanks. But Popkiss has no doubt that he will be able to get away. He has carefully noted all the back doubles out of Southampton where he lives. And if you buy the book you will get to know all these useful tips. (As the *Guardian* reporter pointed out, Popkiss will find that all the back doubles of Southampton will be blocked by all the thousands of readers of his book. However, he will have made a pile out of it by then. You can't win 'em all. And you can't take it with you.)

Does nobody want to know the little fact that there is a simple method of avoiding a nuclear holocaust? Simply abolish capitalism, the cause of all wars in the modern world (and of all the other social evils as well). Why wait till the bombs are falling?

L E WEIDBERG

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MEETINGS
page 218

Why all this fuss about Welsh?

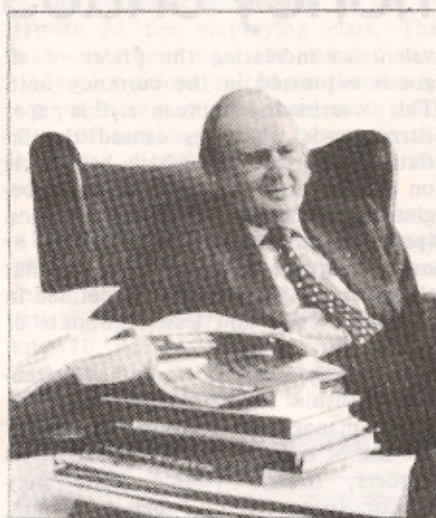
So Gwynfor Evans did not need to fast after all. Wales will have its all-Welsh TV channel. The Tories, after saying they would break their election promise, are now going to keep it. Nicholas Edwards, Secretary of State for Wales, after first insisting that his party would not be deflected by threats of violence, justified its second U-turn by saying that it "could not withstand the threat of violence". "We misjudged our ability to convert opinion", he added.

In fact, the issue of the fourth channel figured no more than tiny in the preoccupations of the majority of people in the highly populated parts of Wales. A certain number of them would, if asked, have probably declared themselves in favour of a Welsh-only service on Channel 4. But this would only have been because they wished to get rid of the Welsh programmes at present on the other channels. Hunger strike or no hunger strike there was never any question of people getting seriously worked up about TV in Welsh, and still less of their giving support to a campaign of violence in favour of it. A visit to Westminster by the Archbishop of Wales and other assorted dignitaries was enough to convince the Tory leadership that the population of Wales was up in arms and ready to fight to have Welsh on telly. But the powers-that-be got it wrong again, just as they did over devolution.

Ironically it is the Tories' second change of mind, more than their first, which may do them the most harm among the electorate in Wales. For they will not be thanked by the non-Welsh speaking majority when it fully sinks in, as it has not yet done, that the fourth channel will be seen *everywhere* in Britain but that *only* in Wales will it be transmitted in Welsh. And even Welsh speaking viewers will probably be disappointed with a service which is almost certain to be of low quality owing to lack of funds from advertising.

But why all this fuss about Welsh? What is actually happening to the language? Well, from being the majority language in the last century and that of half the population (929,000) in 1901, Welsh is now known, according to the 1971 census figures, by only 20.9 per cent (less than 600,000) of the population of Wales.* And even this figure is probably an overestimate based on false information given by nationalist sympathisers on their census forms. What makes the future for Welsh look even dimmer is the census figure of 13.6 per cent for children aged 3 to 10 knowing the language. This decline is due to the development of British capitalism which in the 19th and early 20th century brought to Wales large

numbers of industrial workers from England and Ireland (their descendants now probably form the majority of people living in Wales), which in the inter-war years caused many native Welsh speakers to emigrate to England in search of work, and which all along has exerted tremendous direct pressure on the Welsh language by its preponderant use of English in business, administration, education, technology and communications generally. It has forced Welsh speakers to get to know and use English for reasons of social and economic survival, and the incentive to know, use and transmit Welsh has been reduced accordingly. Now, less than 1 per cent of people in Wales are Welsh-only speakers and between 1961 and



Behind the pacifism a deliberate threat of violence

1971 alone Welsh lost speakers at the rate of about 200 per week.

To arrest this decline in the language and encourage its wider use is one of the stated aims of Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Nationalist Party, and was the reason given for its leader's proposed fast. In recent years its efforts on behalf of the language seem to have had a certain degree of success with government agreement to bilingualism on road signs, notices and official forms and an expansion in Welsh-medium schools. But it is doubtful whether any of this or indeed any of its activities at all have actually led to more people knowing Welsh or using it regularly. On the contrary the evidence points to a continued decline in the use of Welsh accompanied by a decrease in sympathy for the language among non-Welsh

speakers due to the nationalists' policy of trying to impose Welsh on those who neither understand it nor want to learn it.

This is a process which will almost certainly be accelerated by the coming all-Welsh TV channel. English-only viewers will resent having to miss programmes available to people elsewhere and this will make them less likely to sympathise with efforts to keep Welsh alive. In addition the lower quality of programme on the Welsh channel will make Welsh speakers more likely to tune in to English programmes instead and so miss what is at present the only contact some of them have with the native language. So by their action Plaid Cymru may well have done the language more harm than good.

Plaid Cymru were successful however in finding the issue they so badly needed to rally support. In last year's general election only 8.1 per cent of all people in Wales voted for them. Their stock had gone down dramatically after the March 1979 devolution referendum. Here they had hoped for a massive vote in favour of a Welsh assembly, which they saw as a half-way house to independence. The 4 to 1 majority against what in reality would have been no more than a modest administrative reform left them shattered. Their argument that nationalism is the only solution to the problems of a backward Wales where wages are lower and unemployment higher than the national average was emphatically rejected by the people of Wales. After that groups of militants tried direct action tactics (bomb attacks on holiday homes) to attract attention to their cause, but it was the TV issue that gave the nationalists a chance to get back into the limelight "respectably". It is worth noting however that Gwynfor Evans's threatened fast, although in itself a peaceful form of protest, carried with it a deliberate menace of violence. "The responsibility for any acts of violence that may occur as a result of my hunger strike lies on the doorstep of our government", said Evans in a newspaper interview (*South Wales Evening Post*, 1 September 1980) and this underlined the dictatorial nature of nationalist attempts to impose their will on the non-nationalist majority.

But even if the nationalists managed to win the support of the people of Wales and to bring into being an independent state would the evils they now see as being inflicted on Wales by rule from London be eradicated? For the answer one need only look across the Irish Sea where almost 60 years of independence has left Eire with the same combination of unemployment, inflation, industrial conflict and bad

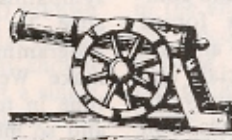
*Statistics are taken from: *Report on the Welsh Language*, HMSO, 1963; *Census 1971: Report on the Welsh Language in Wales*, HMSO, 1973; and D. Balsom and M. Burch, *A Political and Electoral Handbook for Wales*, Gower Publishing Co, Farnborough, 1980.

housing as Wales and has left the Irish language virtually dead. A faction within the Welsh Language Society, the direct action wing of the nationalist movement, has apparently learned this lesson and sees the Welsh language and culture as more likely to survive by struggle within the present arrangements than by the winning of formal political independence from the rest of Britain. They recognise that an independent Wales would continue, for all practical purposes, to be totally dependent on its bigger more powerful neighbour and that the pressure on the language would

continue and probably intensify due to its supporters sitting back on their victory.

So the nationalists may be cock-a-hoop over the Tory surrender and convinced they have won a famous victory for the language. But, as they will realise later, that victory is illusory, short-term and in reality part of a longer-term process of defeat. In the history of capitalism their action will be seen as a hard fought exercise in futility. For—let there be no mistake about it—as long as capitalism continues to live, the Welsh language will continue to die. **HKM**

Briefing



International money chaos

A currency unit is always in the end the name for a specific amount of gold (or silver). At one time—when paper currency was convertible on demand into a fixed amount of gold—this was obvious but has now become obscured in the system of “managed currencies” which grew up between the wars. In nearly all countries today the currency—the actual medium of circulation—is not gold nor even a paper currency convertible into gold but inconvertible paper notes and coins. Such a currency is said to be “managed” because the amount of it in circulation depends entirely on political decisions.

Before the era of managed currencies the link between a currency and gold was always clear. A law defined the meaning of the name of the currency (pound, mark, franc) in terms of a certain amount of gold (or silver, or both). This is no longer the case but the pound and other currencies continue to represent in *economic reality* a certain amount of gold. Gold is still today the money-commodity, the only real money, even though it has been replaced as the medium of circulation by paper and metallic tokens.

With a managed currency a government institution (Ministry of Finance, Central Bank) has to decide how much is put into circulation. The amount of currency needed to maintain a stable price level, however, is fixed by economic factors outside of government control, such as the total amount of buying and selling transactions, debts to be settled, velocity of circulation of the currency. The government is of course free to issue more (or less) than this amount, but if it issues more then the currency will depreciate.

The effect will be the same as if, under the old system, the government had passed a law re-defining the meaning of the word *pound* in terms of a *lesser* amount of gold—which is equi-

valent to increasing the prices of all goods expressed in the currency unit. This—overissuing an inconvertible paper currency—is what has caused the inflationary price rises which have gone on continuously in Britain since the beginning of the last world war. Inflation (properly understood as inflating, or overissuing, the currency) means that the currency has come to be defined in terms of lesser and lesser amounts of gold.

A managed currency only has a circulation within the borders of the state which manages it. No state can enforce the use of its paper currency outside its borders, though people there may choose to accept it. Paper currencies, however, can still be exchanged with each other. What determines their rate of exchange?

What we have said about the paper pound being the name for a certain amount of gold applies equally to the other paper currencies. The paper mark and the paper franc are also names for amounts of gold, though different amounts of gold. In fact up until the end of 1971 the currencies of the member states of the International Monetary Fund were declared to the Fund in terms of weights of gold. Thus if the French franc was defined as 3gm of gold and the English pound as 39gm, then the rate of exchange between francs and pounds was £1 = 13 francs.

The Member states of the IMF were supposed to maintain a more or less fixed rate of exchange between their currencies and those of the other members.

Had it not been for the inflationary policies pursued by all states this would have proved a relatively easy task. But in fact all states inflated their currencies, though not to an equal extent, so that the parities declared to the IMF came to no longer correspond to the economic reality. Those countries which had inflated their currencies more than average were sooner or later compelled to declare to the IMF that their currency should now be officially regarded as representing a lesser amount of gold. This *devaluation* meant that the exchange rate with other currencies had altered: their currency would now exchange for a lesser amount of all other currencies. On the other hand those countries which had a below average inflation were compelled to up-value their currency, known as *revaluation*, as happened a number of times to the D-mark and the Swiss Franc.

A devaluation then was a recognition on the international level of a currency depreciation that had already occurred internally. This was why Wilson was in a sense right when he declared in his famous 1967 statement that devaluation left unchanged the value of the pounds in our pockets. It did, because the depreciation had already taken place before! (As the Wilson government continued the policy of currency inflation, the pounds in our pockets did in fact continue to shrink, but because of the continuing inflation of the currency rather than because of the devaluation).

At the end of 1971 the IMF system of fixed parities, with periodic devaluations and revaluations as necessary, broke down. Instead countries just let their currencies float. What this means is that an internal depreciation of a currency resulting from its inflation is now immediately reflected in its rate of exchange with other currencies instead of building up towards an eventual devaluation.

Some countries link their currencies to others, agreeing that they will not let their currencies fall or rise above or below a certain margin compared with the other currencies in the system. One such system was the famous “snake” of European currencies, of which Britain was a member for a short while. The European Monetary System (EMS) is another such system.

For such systems to work each of the states involved has to have more or less the same rate of inflation. For if one state had a greater rate of inflation than the others, then its currency would tend to fall below the lower limit and in order to maintain itself in the system it would have to use up its reserves to buy its own currency so as to maintain its price (exchange rate with the others). The EMS does provide for the establishment of a special fund to help states in

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difficulty but its clear aim is to try to keep inflation rates down to the German level.

The last Labour government, presumably anxious to have a free hand to continue inflating the pound as it wished, refused to give an undertaking to keep inflation down that much and so Britain didn't join. The present Conservative government has announced its intention to join, but is waiting for the time when (if!) the rate of inflation in Britain is at

a more internationally acceptable level.

All these "systems" in the end are just makeshifts since none of them openly recognise that the only real money in the world today remains gold. Capitalists are more realistic—which explains the rise in the price of gold, and why it likely to keep on rising: nobody wants to be left holding worthless paper money as the international monetary system staggers from crisis to crisis.

ALB

Taking the tube

Public debate concerning the ills of London's transport network has been aroused by the recent publication of a PA Management Consultant's report condemning as inefficient the eleven-man London Transport Executive, appointed by the Greater London Council. Discontent with the service has been heightened by the Holborn train crash of July 9, in which twenty people were hurt. But what is the real nature of the underground train service on which 594 million journeys were made during 1979?

In the areas of concentrated industry which the present economic system creates, it is necessary to have a similarly concentrated, fast and cheap method of transporting workers to and from the offices, factories, plants and warehouses with a minimum of fuss.

In 1863 the Metropolitan Line was opened, running from Paddington to Farringdon Street. The District Line opened five years later. Both lines at first had steam trains and, despite occasional surface sections and ventilation gratings, the smoke made travelling very uncomfortable indeed. Electrification of both of these lines, later considerably extended and interconnected, was completed in 1905. Underground railways, which extend the process of concentration of work in specific areas below the ground itself, swiftly followed in Glasgow, New York, Paris and Moscow, and are now to be found in most of the world's centres of capital accumulation.

The London Underground now consists of some ten lines. Under an Act of 1933 the entire network, together with the trams, buses and trolley-buses, was transferred to the ownership of the London Passenger Transport Board. In 1948 this became known as the London Transport Executive, a group of the nationalised British Railways. In 1979, the GLC invested £110.7 million in London Transport, over which it now has full control. Although fares have increased by 58 per cent over the last four years, London Transport has been running at a loss of several million each year.

But any profit made by such a concern would be less significant than the service it does capitalism in general, for

London Transport is held responsible by London's employers for transporting the bulk of their workers to and from work each day. This is the case for transport services of this kind to be nationalised; the state which runs them is the collective expression of the interests of the employing class. This transportation must be carried out under conditions suited to those who are on their way to donate their daily dose of surplus, unpaid labour to the capitalist class. Neither comfort nor dignity is important.

On entering the tube you are overwhelmed by the choking, stuffy atmosphere created by many people hurrying in all directions in a confined, subterranean space. Every morning between 7 and 10, 458,000 people enter central London on the Underground and at Piccadilly Circus one line is as far as 102



feet below ground level. Bleary-eyed, dazed and tense, the working class jostle each other as they file down the escalators, sweating before the working day has even begun. The advertising process begins as blinking beings suck up the images of corseted crotches; blazoned, buxom breasts and bubbling beverages. Futile feminist stickers proclaim that "This Degrades Women". Certainly, sticking up reformist slogans on the walls does degrade the women who do it, but as for the adverts, capitalism will inevitably degrade anything and plunder all human dignity in the quest for profit.

Down below, the advertising hoardings are full size, and the bodies are moving even more quickly. The uniform tunnels serve to accentuate the

drab existence of those who tread, with symbolic import, along them. Having handed some money to a uniformed fellow worker who passes it to his or her state capitalist employer, you wait as the train approaches, fuller than a cattle-truck on market day. The workers, anxious to go and offer their energies to the enterprises which employ them, try to squeeze into the carriages, cheek to cheek with one another. Station guards throw along the platforms the authority invested in a grimy grey, shapeless suit with a little metal badge, as they order the passengers to "Get right down into the car". The electric doors close and by breathing in and standing on tiptoes the human commodities manage to fit into the compartment. At each stop, London Transport's pampered passengers fight through the sweaty crush to get to the doors; missing their stop means being late for work and risking trouble from the boss. Finally the passengers are spewed on to the streets. Blinking at the daylight we march to clock in for our day's service to our Users.

Every aspect of these journeys is humiliating. The frenzied hurry of the poorly constructed train along the poorly constructed and maintained lines sometimes produces a violent jolting effect, reminding the passengers which social class they were born into as they are thrown together in the carriages. Harshly glaring white neon strips illuminate grotesquely grimacing advertisements advising what can be done with everything from unwanted hair to unwanted pregnancies. Unwanted social systems can only be removed by political action, though, and if these travellers paid half as much attention to the way in which they live and die as they do to the toupees and brassieres, such action would not be much delayed. In the "Smokers" carriages, surrounded by fag-ends, people peer out from behind the protection of newspapers, staring into space as they suck on cigarettes. In "No-smoking" carriages, the air is clearer but not the minds.

Underground railways typify the needs of capitalism. They crystallise the requirements of a system of concentrated industry run by men and women who do not own it and are therefore not able to determine the conditions in which they work or travel to work. They also amply demonstrate the stupidity of proposing nationalisation as a solution to the problems produced by the profit system. Try to pass a barrier without a ticket and the LT worker will soon show you in whose interests the transport system is run. By contrast, common ownership of the means of transportation will allow free and unlimited access to it, as with all other goods and services produced by society. In socialism, transport systems will for the first time be designed according to the wishes and needs of people using the transport, not of the people using the passengers.

C. SLAPPER

MEETINGS AND NOTICES

CAMBRIDGE

Friday 28 November 7.30
THE BOMB AND THE DOLE QUEUE
 —ABOLISH THE CAUSE
 Speaker: K. Knight
 Mawson Hall, Mawson Road

GUILDFORD

Friday 14 November 8.00
RACISM AND PREJUDICE
 Speaker: T. Bullen
 Friends Meeting House
 Ward Street

HARROW

Wednesday 12 November 7.30
REFORM OR REVOLUTION?
 Speaker: G. Slapper
 Victoria Hall, Sheepcote Road

LONDON

CENTRAL
 Monday 10 November 8.00
THE BOMB AND THE DOLE QUEUE
 —ABOLISH THE CAUSE
 Speakers: S. Coleman, D. Donnelly
 and E. Hardy
 Small Conway Hall
 Red Lion Square, WC1

ISLINGTON

Monday 3 November 8.00
BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS
 Speaker: S. Coleman
 Hemingford Arms
 158 Hemingford Road N1

N.W. LONDON

Thursday 13 November 8.00
DEVELOPING CAPITALISM
IN CHINA
 Speaker: J. Carter
 Abbey Community Centre
 Belsize Road NW6
 (corner of Abbey Road)

PADDINGTON

Thursday 6 November 8.30
MAX STIRNER: INDIVIDUAL
ANARCHISM OR SOCIALISM?
 Discussion opened by
 S. E. Parker, editor of the
 anarchist journal, *Minus One*,
 The Swan, Needham Road W11
 (off Westbourne Grove)
 Thursday 4 December 8.30
2 MILLION OUT OF WORK
 Speaker: C. May
 (venue as above)

S.W. LONDON

Monday 24 November 8.00
DEVELOPING CAPITALISM
IN CHINA
 Speaker: J. Carter
 52 Clapham High Street SW4

OUTDOOR MEETINGS

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THE BOMB AND THE DOLE QUEUE—ABOLISH THE CAUSE

Speakers

S. Coleman (on war)
 E. Hardy (on unemployment)
 D. Donnelly (on the socialist alternative)

—
NOVEMBER
MONDAY 10, 8.00

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, WC1

DEVELOPING CAPITALISM IN CHINA

Speaker: J. Carter

TWO PUBLIC MEETINGS

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 Thursday 13 November 8.00
 Abbey Community Centre
 Belsize Road NW6
 (corner of Abbey Road)

and

S.W. LONDON
 Monday 24 November 8.00
 52 Clapham High Street SW4

SEAHAM

Thursday 6 November 2.00
SOCIALISM EXPLAINED
 Speaker: H. Young
 Rock House, Seaham

Friday 7 November 7.30
DEBATE

WHICH PARTY SHOULD THE WORKING CLASS SUPPORT— TORY OR SPGB?

Speakers: David Milburn
 (Chester-le-Street Conservative Party)
 and H. Young (SPGB)
 Carlton Arms, Seaham

NEWCASTLE

Saturday 8 November 2.00
 Eldon Square
 Speaker: H. Young

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON UNION

Monday 10 November 1.00
WHY TONY BENN SHOULD
BE A SOCIALIST
 Speaker: D. Donnelly
 Room 3E, ULU
 Malet Street WC1

CORRECTIONS

LIBERALS HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE

The accidental omission of a couple of lines in the above article in the October *Socialist Standard* (p. 186) had the effect of our saying exactly the opposite of what we intended. The final sentence in the first paragraph in the second column should have read:

It aims to preserve the status quo, a society in which a small minority (the capitalist class) own most of the wealth and the vast majority (the working class) own nothing to speak of and in order to live are compelled to sell their energies to an employer for a wage or salary.

We apologise for this mistake.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

POLITICAL NOTES

A mistake crept into the item 'How to run a "workers' State"' in the September *Socialist Standard* which distorted the meaning. It should have read:

Mr. Szydlak, who is a member of the Polish Politbureau, is reported to have told the workers: "The authorities (not the workers, as printed) do not intend to give up their power or to share it with anyone else".

We apologise for this mistake.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Discussion Groups

BRISTOL. 2nd Thursday in month, 7.00. The Waggon and Horses, Stapleton Rd, Bristol. Corres: J. Flowers, 101 Chesterfield Rd, St. Andrews, Bristol BS6 5DS.

CARDIFF. A. McNeeney, 51 Pen-y-lan Road, Roath, Cardiff. Tel. (0222) 390048.

MANCHESTER. Thursdays 8.30. The Crown Hotel, 321 Deansgate.

NOTTINGHAM. 3rd Monday in month, 7.30. 33, Church Drive, Carrington, Nottingham. Corres: F. V. Cash, 62 William Street, Derby DE1 3LZ.

NORTHAMPTON. K. Taylor, 52 Avon Drive, Kings Heath. Tel. (0604-) 582130.

READING. E. Tasker, 42 Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading RG6 2QR.

STOKE-ON-TRENT. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month, 8.30. The Coachmakers Arms, Lichfield Street, Hanley. Corres: L. Breeze, 15 Harrop Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 2NA.

DIRECTORY

Branches

BIRMINGHAM. 2nd and 4th Thursdays in month, 7.30. Dr. Johnson House, Bull Street. Corres. W. Mack, 36 Alderpsits Road, Shard End, Birmingham B34 7RR. Tel. (021-) 748 5805.

BOLTON. Tuesdays 8.30. The Founders Arms, St. Georges Street. Corres. Stephen Finch, 3 Hinkler Avenue, Great Lever, Bolton. Tel. (0204-) 651892.

CAMDEN (BLOOMSBURY). 1st and 3rd Thursdays in month, 6.00 to 8.00. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Corres. Conway Hall.

EDINBURGH. 2nd and 4th Thursdays in month, 8.00. Trades Council Halls, 14 Picardy Place. Corres. Anne Dalgleish, 5 Queensway, Pennicuik, Midlothian EH26 0HE. Tel. (71-) 72261.

GLASGOW. Mondays 8.00. Woodside Halls, Clarendon St. Corres. R. Donnelly, 15 Napierhall Street.

GUILDFORD. 2nd and 4th Friday 7.00. Friends Meeting House, North Street. Corres. T. Bullen, 17 Bellfields Road, Guildford GU1 1QG. Tel. (0483) 34958.

HARINGEY. Thursdays 8.00. West Green library, Vincent Road, Tottenham, London N15 (few minutes from Turnpike Lane tube). Corres. 17 Dorset Rd, N22.

ISLINGTON. Mondays 8.00. Latin American Bookshop, 29 Islington Park Street (off Upper Street), N1. Corres. Chris Duffon, 19 Brambledown, 77 Crouch Hill, N4.

LEWISHAM. 2nd and 4th Thursdays in month, 8.15. Room 2, Davenport House, Davenport Road, London SE6. Corres. Davenport House.

MID HERTS. 2nd Wednesday in month. For details of venue contact P. Mattingly, 27 Woodstock Road, Broxbourne, Herts. Tel. 6164872.

NORTH EAST. 1st and 3rd Wednesdays in month, 7.30. Rock House Community Centre, Seaham, Co. Durham. Corres. V. Maratty, 184 The Avenue, Deneside, Seaham.

NORTH WEST LONDON. 2nd and 4th Thursdays in month, 8.00. Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Road, NW6 (corner of Abbey Road, next to Lillie Langtry pub). Corres. C. May, 1 Hanover Road, NW10. Tel. 459 3437.

PADDINGTON. Thursdays 8.30. The Swan, 17 Needham Road W11 (off Westbourne Grove). Corres. SPGB, 76 Ladbroke Grove, W11.

REDBRIDGE. 1st and 3rd Thursdays in month, 8.00. Abbey Hall, 87 Axe Street, Barking (rear of Town Hall). Corres. D. Deutz, 4 St. Mary's Ave, London E11.

SOUTHEND. 1st and 3rd Tuesdays in month, 8.00. 19 Kingswood Chase, Leigh-on-Sea. Corres. A. Partner, 28 Hambro Hill, Rayleigh, Essex. Rayleigh (0268) 774974.

SOUTH WEST LONDON. Mondays (except Bank holidays) 8.30. Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4. Corres. 52 Clapham High Street, SW4.

SWANSEA. 2nd and 4th Mondays in month, 7.30 Central Library, Alexandra Rd, Swansea. Corres. H. K. Moss, 4 Aylesbury Road, Brynmill, Swansea SA2 0BS. Tel. (0792-) 464872.

WEST LONDON. Fridays 8.00. The Old Chiswick Town Hall, Turnham Green (corner of Sutton Court Rd.). Corres. E. Haynes, 127 Kingston Rd, Teddington, Middlesex.

For Information

BATH. B. McNeeney, The Cottage, Hartley Farm, Upper Swainswick, Bath. Tel. (0225-) 852051.

BRISTOL. J. Flowers, 101 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol BS6 5DS.

DERBY. Frank V. Cash, 62 William Street, Derby DE1 3LZ.

DONCASTER. R. W. Edwards, 9 Mattersey Close, Doncaster DN4 7PZ. Tel. 0302 57996.

DUNDEE. J. Finnie, 28 Hill Street.

EAST GRINSTEAD. A. Atkinson, 24 Estcoats Drive, East Grinstead, W. Sussex. Tel. (0342-) 311874.

EAST KILBRIDE. J. Thompson, 2 Balfour Terrace, Murray, East Kilbride. Tel. (32) 23083.

EDGWARE. A. Waite, 61 Fairfield Crescent. Tel. (01) 952 3556.

ESSEX/SUFFOLK. Mackenzie Dodds, Fern Cottage, Fern Hill, Glensford, Suffolk.

HARROW. Ian Stuart, 39 Eastcote Road, Pinner. Tel. 866 0216.

HARWICH. C. Bennett, 48 Ashley Road, Dovercourt, Harwich, Essex.

HULL. Peter Pink, 9 Beech Grove, Beverly Road. Tel. (0482-) 441296.

MID LANCs. Brian Livesey, 149 Belfield Road, Accrington, Lancs.

HASLEMERE. R. Cox, 86 Lion Lane. Tel. (0428) 2885.

MEDWAY (Kent). L. Cox, 110 Bell's Lane, Hoo, Rochester, Kent. Tel. 0634 250513.

MILTON KEYNES. C. Kincaid, 14 Weavers Hill, Milton Keynes, MK11 2BD.

NEWPORT. Miles Webb, 23 Stamford Court, Newport, Gwent.

NORWICH. Colin Green, 3 Bell Meadow, Higham. Tel. 985 468.

NOTTINGHAM. 3rd Thursday in month, 7.30. 33 Church Drive, Carrington. Corres. F. V. Cash, 62 William Street, Derby DE1 3LZ.

OXFORD. J. Robertson, 80 Iffley Turn, Oxford. 0865 770834.

SKIPTON. R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Grassington (0756-) 752621.

SUNDERLAND. J. Toomey, 9 Gillingham Road, Grindon. 078 324 2039.

WOKING. C. Skelton, 1 Adelaide Villas, Copse Road, St. Johns. Woking 66119.

WELWYN GARDEN CITY. C. Cox, 118 Oakdale, Welwyn Gdn City. Tel. 27591.

WEST YORKSHIRE. Corres. 20 Bradford St, Bradford BD7 2ES. Tel. (0274-) 75136.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds:

- 1] That Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
- 2] That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- 3] That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- 4] That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
- 5] That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- 6] That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
- 7] That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
- 8] The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action, determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Anyone agreeing with the above principles and wishing to join should apply to nearest branch or Head Office.

Socialist Party of Great Britain

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.
Tel. (01-) 622 3811

The Executive Committee meets 7.30 every Tuesday at 52 Clapham High Street, SW4. Correspondence for the Executive Committee should be sent to the General Secretary at the above address. Letters containing postal orders, cheques to be crossed, made payable to SPGB and sent to A. Waite at the above address. Orders for literature should be sent to the Literature Dept. at the above address. Articles, correspondence and notices for the *Socialist Standard* to be sent to SSPC, 76 Ladbroke Grove, London W11.

Diary of a worker

Monday

Woke up. Went to work. Came home, had tea. Switched on box, sat down, fell asleep. Woke up, switched off box, went to bed. Couldn't sleep, finally dropped off at 1 o'clock.

Tuesday

Six o'clock alarm went off. Dragged myself out of bed. Missed bus, late for work. Came home, had tea, switched on box, load of rubbish on a Tuesday. Watched a programme called *The Voyage of the Beagle* which I thought was a Walt Disney adventure story. Turned out to be about someone called Darwin collecting bugs. Fell asleep in the armchair. Woke up, switched off telly and went to bed. Couldn't sleep, so read *Penthouse* instead.

Wednesday

Prayed for alarm not to go off. Alarm went off. Pulled myself out of bed. Quick cup of tea and some toast. Switched on tranny for time check. Disc jockey gibbering away. Switched off quickly. Dashed out to bus stop, missed bus, late for work. Bit of excitement in work today. The management was holding a presentation for old Dobbs, who was retiring after fifty years service with the firm; gave us a break from the usual boring routine. They presented him with a digital alarm clock, guaranteed for ten years, which means it will probably last longer than he will. Came home, had tea, switched on the television. Catastrophe! Telly wasn't working. Slumped in chair completely stunned. Too numb to have a catnap, so I decided to read the *Sun* which I didn't have time to do in the tea break. Finally decided to have an early night. Couldn't sleep, so I decided to try counting sheep, only trouble was that they all seemed to have old Dobbs's face.

Thursday

Hoped the alarm was broken. Alarm not broken. Crawled out of bed, had breakfast. Jones next door offered to give me a lift into work every morning in exchange for my giving him petrol money, which meant that I could have an extra half-hour in bed every morning. Sauntered out of house and climbed into car. Car wouldn't start. Climbed back out again. Missed bus, late for work. Got a red-hot tip from a man at work whose cousin drinks in the same pub as a man who works in a stable, so at dinner time I nipped out to the bookie's and stuck a pound each way



on *Dangling Carrot* running in the three-fifteen at Doncaster. Horse got beaten by a nose. Came home, had tea. Television fixed. Switched on, sat down. Good night for television. Fred and Ginger tripping the light fantastic. Fell asleep. Woke up, switched off box, went to bed. Finally dropped off at two.

Friday

Hoped alarm would fail to go off. Alarm failed to go off. Panic. Jumped out of bed, threw on clothes and rushed out. Quick "Good morning" to Jones's bum sticking out from under bonnet. Missed bus, late for work. Read in the paper today about a chap who had just won three quarters of a million pounds on the football pools. Too much money for one person. They should divide it up into lots of smaller prizes so that more people would have a better chance of winning. Besides, you couldn't be happy with all that money. Look at all those stories you read about how unhappy rich people are.

Got another sure-fire tip today, this time from the canteen lady whose granny plays the ouija board; *Pie In the Sky* running in the two-thirty at Lingfield. Since I got paid today I could

afford two pounds each way. Unfortunately, it didn't have a prayer. Came home, had tea. No telly tonight, instead went up the pub. Had a few pints, played darts, had another few pints... staggered home, went to bed, no problem falling asleep.

Saturday

Fell out of bed before alarm went off. Too ill to have breakfast. Actually managed to catch the bus and was congratulating myself when I remembered that I don't work on a Saturday. Back up the pub tonight. Lively and interesting discussion about whether that last goal was offside at today's match, and then down to the serious business of playing our darts league match. Out of the pub and into the Chinese take-away, then home in time for the late-night double movie bill: *Carry on Wage-Slave* followed by: *The Night of the Blood-Sucking Parasite*.

Sunday

Best day of the week. Walked round to the pub for a couple of pints before dinner. Afterwards it was such a nice day, I decided to stroll home through the park so that I could work up an appetite for my favourite meal, that traditional English dinner of roast soya beef, and instant Yorkshire pudding. I was crossing the square when I spotted this guy up on a soap-box, so I stopped for a laugh. He was talking about a world without money! What a load of rubbish. I was going to stay and shoot down all his commie arguments, but then I realised that it was almost time for *Match of the Day* so I decided instead to leave with one really witty parting shot. I shouted: "Why don't you go back to Russia?!" Nobody laughed. They were probably all Commies too. Imagine, a world without money! No money to buy all the things you want. Doesn't bear thinking about. Arrive home to see Jones's feet sticking out from beneath his car. He asked me if I was going back round for a few pints later on. Mumbled an excuse about having to do something in the house. Actually, I didn't want to admit that I'd spent the last of my pocket money, so I stayed in and watched the telly instead. Some good films showing on a Sunday night, only trouble is that they are on too late. Went to bed. Couldn't sleep. Very restless tonight, kept thinking about that guy and his world without money. Told me that I was a slave! Crazy. I'm free to do what I like. Eventually dropped off to sleep at three... at six the alarm went off...

TONE